



*Chart
of the
WEST INDIES,
with the adjacent Coast of
South America
showing the Tracks of
DON CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS.*



A

HISTORY
OF THE
LIFE AND VOYAGES
OF
CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS.
BY
WASHINGTON IRVING.

Venient annis
Sæcula seris, quibus Oceanus
Vincula rerum laxet, et ingens
Pateat tellus, Typhisque novos
Detegat Orbes, nec sit terris
Ultima Thule.

Seneca, Medea.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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P R E F A C E.

BEING at Bordeaux, in the winter of 1825-6, I received a letter from Mr. Alexander Everett, Minister Plenipotentiary of the United States at Madrid, informing me of a work then in the press, edited by Don Martin Fernandez de Navarrete, Secretary of the Royal Academy of History, &c., &c., containing a collection of documents relative to the voyages of Columbus, among which were many of a highly important nature, recently discovered. Mr. Everett, at the same time, expressed an opinion that a version of the work into English, by one of our own country, would be peculiarly desirable. I concurred with him in the opinion ; and, having for some time intended a visit to Madrid, I shortly afterwards set off for that capital, with an idea of undertaking, while there, the translation of the work.

Soon after my arrival, the publication of M. Navarrete made its appearance. I found it to contain many documents, hitherto unknown, which

threw additional lights on the discovery of the New World ; and which reflected the greatest credit on the industry and activity of the learned editor. Still the whole presented rather a mass of rich materials for history, than a history itself. And invaluable as such stores may be to the laborious inquirer, the sight of disconnected papers and official documents is apt to be repulsive to the general reader, who seeks for clear and continued narrative. These circumstances made me hesitate in my proposed undertaking ; yet the subject was of so interesting and national a kind, that I could not willingly abandon it.

On considering the matter more maturely, I perceived that, although there were many books, in various languages, relative to Columbus, they all contained limited and incomplete accounts of his life and voyages ; while numerous valuable tracts on the subject existed only in manuscript, or in the form of letters, journals, and public muniments. It appeared to me that a history, faithfully digested from these various materials, was a desideratum in literature, and would be a more satisfactory occupation to myself, and a more acceptable work to my country, than the translation I had contemplated.

I was encouraged to undertake such a work, by the great facilities which I found within my reach at Madrid. I was resident under the roof of the American Consul, O. Rich, Esq., one of the most indefatigable bibliographers in Europe, who, for several years, had made particular researches after every document relative to the early history of America. In his extensive and curious library, I found one of the best collections extant of Spanish colonial history, containing many documents for which I might search elsewhere in vain. This he put at my absolute command, with a frankness and unreserve seldom to be met with among the possessors of such rare and valuable works ; and his library has been my main resource throughout the whole of my labours.

I found also the Royal Library of Madrid, and the library of the Jesuits' College of San Isidro, two noble and extensive collections, open to access, and conducted with great order and liberality. From Don Martin Fernandez de Navarrete, who communicated various valuable and curious pieces of information, discovered in the course of his researches, I received the most obliging assistance : nor can I refrain from testifying my

admiration of the self-sustained zeal of that estimable man, one of the last veterans of Spanish literature, who is almost alone, yet indefatigable in his labours, in a country where, at present, literary exertion meets with but little excitement or reward.

I must acknowledge, also, the liberality of the Duke of Veraguas, the descendant and representative of Columbus, who submitted the archives of his family to my inspection, and took a personal interest in exhibiting the treasures they contained. Nor, lastly, must I omit my deep obligations to my excellent friend Don Antonio de Ugina, treasurer of the Prince Francisco, a gentleman of talents and erudition, and particularly versed in the history of his country and its dependencies. To his unwearied investigations, and silent and unavowed contributions, the world is indebted for much of the accurate information, recently imparted, on points of early colonial history. In the possession of this gentleman are most of the papers of his deceased friend, the late historian Muños, who was cut off in the midst of his valuable labours. These, and various other documents, have been imparted to me by Don

Antonio with a kindness and urbanity which greatly increased, yet lightened the obligation.

With these, and other aids incidentally afforded me by my local situation, I have endeavoured, to the best of my abilities, and making the most of the time which I could allow myself during a sojourn in a foreign country, to construct this history. I have diligently collated all the works that I could find relative to my subject, in print and manuscript ; comparing them, as far as in my power, with original documents, those sure lights of historic research ; endeavouring to ascertain the truth amid those contradictions which will inevitably occur, where several persons have recorded the same facts, viewing them from different points, and under the influence of different interests and feelings.

In the execution of this work I have avoided indulging in mere speculations or general reflections, excepting such as rose naturally out of the subject, preferring to give a minute and circumstantial narrative, omitting no particular that appeared characteristic of the persons, the events, or the times ; and endeavouring to place every fact in such a point of view, that the reader

might perceive its merits, and draw his own maxims and conclusions.

As many points of the history required explanations, drawn from contemporary events and the literature of the times, I have preferred, instead of incumbering the narrative, to give detached illustrations at the end of the work. This also enabled me to indulge in greater latitude of detail, where the subject was of a curious or interesting nature, and the sources of information such as not to be within the common course of reading.

After all, the work is presented to the public with extreme diffidence. All that I can safely claim is, an earnest desire to state the truth, an absence from prejudices respecting the nations mentioned in my history, a strong interest in my subject, and a zeal to make up by assiduity for many deficiencies of which I am conscious.

WASHINGTON IRVING.

Madrid, 1827.

CONTENTS

OF

THE FIRST VOLUME.

BOOK I.

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER I.—Birth, Parentage, and Education of Columbus	5
CHAPTER II.—Early Life of Columbus	15
CHAPTER III.—Progress of Discovery under Prince Henry of Portugal	27
CHAPTER IV.—Residence of Columbus at Lisbon. Ideas concerning Islands in the Ocean	40
CHAPTER V.—Grounds on which Columbus founded his belief of the existence of undiscovered lands in the west	52
CHAPTER VI.—Correspondence of Columbus with Paulo Toscanelli. Events in Portugal relative to Discoveries	66
CHAPTER VII.—Propositions of Columbus to the Court of Portugal	78
CHAPTER VIII.—Departure of Columbus from Portugal, and his Application to other Courts	87

BOOK II.

CHAPTER I.—First Arrival of Columbus in Spain	95
CHAPTER II.—Characters of Ferdinand and Isabella	101

	PAGE
CHAPTER III.—Propositions of Columbus to the Court of Castile	109
CHAPTER IV.—Columbus before the Council at Salamanca	117
CHAPTER V.—Further Applications at the Court of Castile. Columbus follows the Court in its Campaigns	132
CHAPTER VI.—Application to the Duke of Medina Celi. Return to the Convent of La Rabida	145
CHAPTER VII.—Application to the Court at the time of the Surrender of Granada	154
CHAPTER VIII.—Arrangement with the Spanish Sovereigns	165
CHAPTER IX.—Preparations for the Expedition at the Port of Palos	176

BOOK III.

CHAPTER I.—Departure of Columbus on his First Voyage	187
CHAPTER II—Continuation of the Voyage. Variation of the Needle	197
CHAPTER III.—Continuation of the Voyage. Various Terrors of the Seamen	204
CHAPTER IV.—Continuation of the Voyage. Discovery of Land	217

BOOK IV.

CHAPTER I.—First Landing of Columbus in the New World	237
CHAPTER II.—Cruize among the Bahama Islands	252
CHAPTER III.—Discovery and Coasting of Cuba	266
CHAPTER IV.—Further Coasting of Cuba	282

	PAGE
CHAPTER V.—Search after the supposed Island of Babeque.	
Desertion of the Pinta	294
CHAPTER VI.—Discovery of Hispaniola	303
CHAPTER VII.—Coasting of Hispaniola	315
CHAPTER VIII.—Shipwreck	324
CHAPTER IX.—Transactions with the Natives	331
CHAPTER X.—Building of the Fortress of La Navidad	342
CHAPTER XI.—Regulation of the Fortress of La Navidad.	
Departure of Columbus for Spain	350

B O O K V.

CHAPTER I.—Coasting towards the Eastern End of Hispaniola. Meeting with Pinzon. Affair with the Natives at the Gulf of Semana	357
CHAPTER II.—Return Voyage. Violent Storms. Arrival at the Azores	373
CHAPTER III.—Transactions at the Island of St. Mary's .	386
CHAPTER IV.—Arrival at Portugal. Visit to the Court .	393
CHAPTER V.—Reception of Columbus at Palos	409
CHAPTER VI.—Reception of Columbus by the Spanish Court at Barcelona	417
CHAPTER VII.—Sojourn of Columbus at Barcelona. Attentions paid him by the Sovereigns and Courtiers	427
CHAPTER VIII.—Papal Bull of Partition. Preparations for a Second Voyage of Columbus	436

	PAGE
CHAPTER IX.—Diplomatic Negotiations between the Courts of Spain and Portugal with respect to the New Disco- veries	451
CHAPTER X.—Further Preparations for the Second Voyage. Character of Alonzo de Ojeda. Difference of Colum- bus with Soria and Fonseca	460

LIFE AND VOYAGES
OF
COLUMBUS.

THE
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COLUMBUS.

BOOK I.

WHETHER in old times, beyond the reach of history or tradition, and in some remote period of civilization, when, as some imagine, the arts may have flourished to a degree unknown to those whom we term the Ancients, there existed an intercourse between the opposite shores of the Atlantic; whether the Egyptian legend, narrated by Plato, respecting the island of Atalantis was indeed no fable, but the obscure tradition of some vast country, engulfed by one of those mighty convulsions of our globe, which have left traces of the ocean on the summits of lofty mountains, must ever remain matters of vague and visionary specu-

lation. As far as authenticated history extends, nothing was known of terra-firma, and the islands of the western hemisphere, until their discovery towards the close of the fifteenth century. A wandering bark may occasionally have lost sight of the landmarks of the old continents, and been driven by tempests across the wilderness of waters long before the invention of the compass, but never returned to reveal the secrets of the ocean. And though, from time to time, some document has floated to the shores of the old world, giving to its wondering inhabitants evidences of land far beyond their watery horizon; yet no one ventured to spread a sail, and seek that land enveloped in mystery and peril. Or if the legends of the Scandinavian voyagers be correct, and their mysterious Vinland was the coast of Labrador, or the shore of Newfoundland, they had but transient glimpses of the new world, leading to no certain or permanent knowledge, and in a little time lost again to mankind*. Certain it

* See Illustrations at the end of this work. Article SCANDINAVIAN DISCOVERIES.

is that at the beginning of the fifteenth century, when the most intelligent minds were seeking in every direction for the scattered lights of geographical knowledge, a profound ignorance prevailed among the learned as to the western regions of the Atlantic; its vast waters were regarded with awe and wonder, seeming to bound the world as with a chaos, into which conjecture could not penetrate, and enterprise feared to adventure. We need no greater proofs of this than the description given of the Atlantic by Xerif al Edrizi, surnamed the Nubian, an eminent Arabian writer, whose countrymen were the boldest navigators of the middle ages, and possessed all that was then known of geography.

“The ocean,” he observes, “encircles the ultimate bounds of the inhabited earth, and all beyond it is unknown. No one has been able to verify any thing concerning it, on account of its difficult and perilous navigation, its great obscurity, its profound depth, and frequent tempests; through fear of its mighty fishes, and its haughty winds; yet there are many islands in it, some peopled,

others uninhabited. There is no mariner who dares to enter into its deep waters; or if any have done so, they have merely kept along its coasts, fearful of departing from them. The waves of this ocean, although they roll as high as mountains, yet maintain themselves without breaking; for if they broke, it would be impossible for ship to plough them *.”

It is the object of the following work, to relate the deeds and fortunes of the mariner who first had the judgment to divine, and the intrepidity to brave the mysteries of this perilous deep; and who, by his hardy genius, his inflexible constancy, and his heroic courage, brought the ends of the earth into communication with each other. The narrative of his troubled life is the link which connects the history of the old world with that of the new.

* Description of Spain, by Xerif al Edhis: Conde's Spanish translation, Madrid, 1799.

CHAPTER I.

BIRTH, PARENTAGE, AND EDUCATION OF
COLUMBUS.

OF the early days of Christopher Columbus nothing certain is known. The time of his birth, his birth-place, his parentage, are all involved in obscurity; and such has been the perplexing ingenuity of commentators, that it is difficult to extricate the truth from the web of conjectures with which it is interwoven. Judging from the testimony of one of his contemporaries and intimates*, he must have been born about the year 1435 or 1436. Several places contend for the honour of having given him birth, but it seems satisfactorily established that he was a native of the ancient city of Genoa. A like contention has arisen with respect to his lineage. More than one noble family has

* Andrez Bernaldez, commonly known as the Curate of Los Palacios. For remarks on the birth, birth-place, and parentage of Columbus, see the Illustrations at the end of this work.

laid claim to him, since his name has become so illustrious as to confer rather than receive distinction. It is probable that all these branches may have sprung from one common stock, though shaken asunder, and some of them cast down, by the civil wars of Italy. It does not appear that there had been any nobility in his family, within the knowledge of himself or his contemporaries ; nor is the fact material to his fame. It is certainly more honourable to his memory, to be the object of contention among various noble families, than to be able to designate the most illustrious descent. His son Fernando, who wrote his history, and who made a journey to investigate the subject, tacitly relinquishes all claims of the kind ; pronouncing it better that his family should date its glory from the Admiral, than look beyond him, to ascertain whether his predecessors had been ennobled, and had kept hawk and hound ; for “ I am of opinion,” he adds, “ that I should derive less dignity from any nobility of ancestry than from being the son of such a father*.”

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 2.

The immediate parentage of Columbus was poor, though reputable and meritorious, his father being a wool-comber, long resident in the city of Genoa. He was the eldest of four children, having two brothers, Bartholomew, and Giacomo, or as his name is translated into Spanish, Diego, and one sister, of whom nothing is known, excepting that she was married to a person in obscure life, called Giacomo Bavarello.

The family name in Italian is Colombo ; it was latinized into Columbus by himself in his earlier letters, and by others in their writings concerning him, in compliance with the usage of the times when Latin was the general language of correspondence, and that in which every name of historical importance was written. The discoverer, however, is better known in Spanish history as Cristoval Colon, having altered his name when he removed to Spain. The principal reason given by his son for this alteration, was, that his descendants might be distinguished from collateral branches of the family. For this purpose, he recurred to what was supposed to be the Roman

origin of the name, Colonus, which he abbreviated to Colon, to adapt it to the Castilian tongue. From his variety of appellations, the name of Columbus is retained in the present history, as that by which he has been most generally known throughout the world.

His education was but limited, but as extensive, probably, as the indigent circumstances of his parents would permit. While quite a child, he was taught to read and write, and wrote so good a hand, says Las Casas, who possessed many of his manuscripts, that with it he might have earned his bread. To this succeeded arithmetic, drawing, and painting; and in these, observes Las Casas, he likewise acquired sufficient skill to have gained a livelihood*. He was sent for a short time to Pavia, the great school of learning in Lombardy. Here he studied grammar, and became well acquainted with the Latin tongue. His education, however, was principally directed to those sciences necessary to fit him for maritime life. He was instructed in geometry, geography, astro-

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., l. i., c. 3. MS.

nomy, or, as it was at that time termed, astrology, and navigation*. He had, at a very early age, evinced a strong passion for geographical science, and an irresistible inclination for the sea, and he pursued with ardour every congenial study. In the latter part of his life, when, in consequence of the great events which were brought about by his agency, he looked back upon his career with a solemn and superstitious feeling, he mentions this early determination of his mind as a secret impulse from the Deity, guiding him to the studies, and inspiring him with the inclinations, which should fit him for the high decrees he was chosen to accomplish †.

In tracing the early history of a man like Columbus, whose actions have had so vast an effect on human affairs, it is interesting to notice how much has been owing to the influence of events, and how much to an inborn propensity of the mind. The most original and inventive genius grows more or less out of the times; and that

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 3.

† Letter to the Castilian Sovereigns, 1501.

strong impulse, which Columbus considered as supernatural, is unconsciously produced by the operation of external circumstances. Every now and then, thought takes some sudden and general direction ; either revisiting some long neglected region of knowledge, and exploring and reopening its forgotten paths, or breaking with wonder and delight into some fresh and untrodden field of discovery. It is then that an ardent and imaginative genius, catching the impulse of the day, outstrips all less gifted contemporaries, takes the lead of the throng by which it was first put in motion ; and presses forward to achievements, which feebler spirits would never have adventured to attempt. We find an illustration of this remark in Columbus. The strong passion for geographical knowledge which he so early felt, and which gave rise to his after actions, was incident to the age in which he lived. Geographical discovery was the brilliant path of light which was for ever to distinguish the fifteenth century,—the most splendid era of invention in the annals of the world. During the long night of monkish

bigotry and false learning, geography, with the other sciences, had been lost to the European nations. Fortunately it had not been lost to mankind: it had taken refuge in the bosom of Africa. While the pedantic schoolmen of the cloisters were wasting time and talent, and confounding erudition by idle reveries, and sophistical dialectics, the Arabian sages, assembled at Senaar, were taking the measurement of a degree of latitude, and calculating the circumference of the earth, on the vast plains of Mesopotamia.

True knowledge, thus happily preserved, was now making its way back to Europe. The revival of science accompanied the revival of letters. Among the various authors which the awakening zeal for ancient literature had once more brought into notice, were Pliny, Pomponius Mela, and Strabo. From these was regained a fund of geographical knowledge, which had long faded from the public mind. Curiosity was aroused to pursue this forgotten path, thus suddenly reopened. A translation of the work of Ptolemy had been

made into Latin, at the commencement of the century, by Emanuel Chrysoloras, a noble and learned Greek, and had thus been rendered more familiar to the Italian students. Another translation had followed, by James Angel de Scarpiaria, of which fair and beautiful copies became common in the Italian libraries*. The writings also began to be sought after of Averroes, Alfraganus, and other Arabian sages, who had kept the sacred fire of science alive, during the interval of European darkness.

The knowledge thus reviving was but limited and imperfect; yet like the return of morning light, it was full of interest and beauty. It seemed to call a new creation into existence, and broke, with all the charm of wonder, upon imaginative minds. They were surprised at their own ignorance of the world around them. Every step seemed discovery, for every region beyond their native country was in a manner *terra incognita*.

Such was the state of information and feeling with respect to this interesting science, in the

* Andres, Hist. B. Let., lib. iii., cap. 2.

early part of the fifteenth century. An interest still more intense was awakening, from the discoveries that began to be made along the Atlantic coasts of Africa ; and must have been particularly felt among a maritime and commercial people like the Genoese. To these circumstances may we ascribe the enthusiastic devotion which Columbus imbibed in his childhood for cosmographical studies, and which influenced all his after fortunes.

In considering his scanty education, it is worthy of notice how little he owed, from the very first, to adventitious aid ; how much to the native energy of his character, and the fertility of his mind. The short time that he remained at Pavia was barely sufficient to give him the rudiments of the necessary sciences ; the familiar acquaintance with them, which he evinced in after life, must have been the result of diligent self-schooling, and casual hours of study, amidst the cares and vicissitudes of a rugged and wandering life. He was one of those men of strong natural genius, who appear to form themselves ; who, from having to contend at their very outset with privations and

impediments, acquire an intrepidity to encounter, and a facility to vanquish difficulties, throughout their career. Such men learn to effect great purposes with small means, supplying this deficiency by the resources of their own energy and invention. This, from his earliest commencement, throughout the whole of his life, was one of the remarkable features in the history of Columbus. In every undertaking, the scantiness and apparent insufficiency of his means enhance the grandeur of his achievements.

CHAPTER II.

EARLY LIFE OF COLUMBUS.

COLUMBUS left the university of Pavia while yet extremely young, and returned to his father's house in Genoa. It has been asserted by Guistimani, a contemporary writer, in his annals of that republic, and repeated by other historians*, that he remained for some time in Genoa, following his father's trade of wool-combing. The assertion is indignantly contradicted by his son Fernando, who, however, gives us no information to supply its place†. The opinion generally received, is, that he immediately entered into nautical life, for which he had been educated, and to which he was prompted by his roving and enterprising disposition. He says himself, that he began to navigate at fourteen years of age‡.

* Anton. Gallo de Navigatione Columbi, &c. Muratori, t. 23. Barta Senarega, de rebus Genuensibus. Muratori, t. 24.

† Hist. del Amirante, c. 2.

‡ Ibid. cap. 4.

In a maritime city, the sea has irresistible attractions for a youth of ardent curiosity, and his imagination pictures forth every thing fair and desirable beyond its waters. Genoa, also, walled and straitened on the land side by rugged mountains, yielded but little scope for enterprise on shore; while an opulent and widely extended commerce, visiting every country, and a roving marine, battling in every sea, naturally led forth her children upon the waves as their propitious element. Foglieta, in his history of Genoa, speaks of the proneness of its youth to wander about in quest of fortune, with the intention of returning to settle in their native place; but adds, that of twenty who thus departed scarce two returned; either dying, or marrying in other countries, or being deterred by the tempest of civil discords, which distracted the republic*.

The seafaring life of the Mediterranean, in those days, was made up of hazardous voyages and daring enterprises. Even a commercial expedition resembled a warlike cruise, and the maritime

* Foglieta, *Istoria de Génova*, 1. ii.

merchant had often to fight his way from port to port. Piracy was almost legitimatized. The frequent feuds between the Italian States ; the cruizings of the Catalonians ; the armadas fitted out by private noblemen, who exercised a kind of sovereignty in their own domains, and kept petty armies and navies in their pay ; the roving ships and squadrons of private adventurers, a kind of naval Condottieri, sometimes employed by hostile governments, sometimes scouring the seas in search of lawless booty ; these, with the holy wars continually waged against the Mahometan powers, rendered the narrow seas, to which navigation was principally confined, scenes of the most hardy encounters and trying reverses.

Such was the rugged school in which Columbus was reared, and it would have been deeply interesting to have marked the early developement of his genius amidst its stern adversities. Surrounded by the hardships and humilities which beset a poor adventurer in a seafaring life, he still seems ever to have cherished a lofty tone of thought, and to have fed his imagination with schemes of glorious

enterprise. The severe and varied lessons of his youth gave him that practical knowledge, that fertility of resource, that undaunted resolution and vigilant self-command, for which he was afterwards remarkable. In this way, the fruits of bitter experience are turned to healthful aliment, by a vigorous genius and an aspiring mind.

All this instructive era of his history, however, is covered with darkness. His son Fernando, who could have best elucidated it, has left it in obscurity, or has now and then perplexed us with cross lights ; perhaps unwilling, from a principle of mistaken pride, to reveal the indigence and obscurity from which his father so gloriously emerged. A few vague and scattered anecdotes are all that exist ; but they are interesting as giving glimpses of the checkered and adventurous life he must have led. The first voyage in which we have any account of his being engaged, was a naval expedition, having for its object the recovery of a crown. An armament was fitted out at Genoa in 1459, by John of Anjou, duke of Calabria, to make a

descent upon Naples, in the hope of recovering that kingdom for his father, King Reinier, or Renato, otherwise called René, Count de Provence. In this expedition, the republic of Genoa took a part, furnishing ships and money. There were many private adventurers also, who fitted out ships or galleys, and engaged under the banner of Anjou. Among these, we are told, was a hardy sea-captain named Colombo. There were two naval characters of this name, an uncle and nephew, who had celebrity about this time, and who are claimed by Fernando Columbus as family connexions. They are mentioned occasionally by historians as French commanders, because Genoa was at that time under the protection, or rather the sovereignty, of France, and her ships and captains, being engaged in the expeditions of that power, were identified with the French marine*. The names of these two sea-captains occurring vaguely in history, from time to time, during the obscure part of the career of Columbus, have caused much perplexity to some of his biographers,

* Chausepie's Supp. to Bayle, v. ii., article COLUMBUS.

who have supposed that they designated the discoverer*.

With these commanders he sailed on several occasions, and for a considerable length of time†, and he is said to have embarked with the uncle in the expedition against Naples. There is no authority for this latter fact among the historians who were his contemporaries, none of whom indeed give any particulars of his early biography ; but it has been repeatedly affirmed by later writers, and circumstances concur to give weight to the assertion. It is established that he, at one time, held a separate command in the service of this king of Naples, and was employed in a hardy enterprise to cut out a galley from the port of Tunis. This is incidentally mentioned by himself in one of his letters to Ferdinand and Isabella, written many years afterwards. “It happened to me,” he says, “that King Reinier (whom God has taken to himself) sent me to Tunis to capture the galley Fernandina, and when I arrived off the island of San Pedro, in

* Vide Illustrations, article THE COLOMBOS.

† Hist. del Almirante, cap. 5.

Sardinia, I was informed that there were two ships and a carrack with the galley, by which intelligence my crew were so troubled that they determined to proceed no farther, but to return to Marseilles for another vessel and more people. As I could by no means compel them, I assented apparently to their wishes, altering the point of the compass, and spreading all sail. It was then evening, and next morning we were within the Cape of Carthagena, while all were firmly of opinion that they were sailing toward Marseilles*." We have no further record of this bold enterprise; but we behold in it strong indications of that determined and persevering spirit which ensured him success in his more important undertakings. His expedient to beguile a discontented crew, by deceiving them with respect to the ship's course, is in unison with the stratagem of altering the reckoning, to which he had recourse in his first voyage of discovery.

The struggle of John of Anjou, Duke of Calabria, for the crown of Naples, lasted about four

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 4.

years, with varied fortune, but was finally unsuccessful. The naval part of his expedition, in which Columbus was engaged, distinguished itself by acts of intrepidity ; and at one time when the duke was reduced to take refuge in the island of Ischia, a handful of galleys scoured and controlled the bay of Naples*.

There is an interval of many years, during which we have but one or two shadowy traces of Columbus. He is supposed to have been principally engaged in the Mediterranean and up the Levant, sometimes in voyages of commerce, sometimes in warlike contests between the Italian states, sometimes in pious and predatory expeditions against the infidels. Incidental mention is made, on his own authority, of his having been at the island of Scio, where he saw the mode of procuring mastic†. Certain late authors imagine that they have discovered proofs of his having enjoyed an important command in the marine of his native country. Chaufepie, in his continuation of Bayle, cites a

* See Illustrations, article EXPEDITION OF JOHN OF ANJOU.

† Hist. del Almirante, cap. 4.

report that Columbus was, in 1474, captain of several Genoese ships in the service of Louis XI. of France, and that he attacked and took two Spanish galleys, as a reprisal for the Spaniards having made an irruption into Roussillon ; on account of which king Ferdinand addressed a letter of remonstrance to the French monarch*. Bossi also, in his Memoir of Columbus, mentions a letter found in the archives of Milan, written in 1476, by two illustrious Milanese gentlemen, on their return from Jerusalem, stating that in the previous year, when the Venetian fleet was stationed off Cyprus to guard the island, a Genoese squadron, commanded by one Colombo, brushed by them, shouting “Viva San Giorgio!” the war-cry of Genoa, and were permitted to pass without molestation, the republics being then at peace†. The Colombo mentioned in these two occurrences was in all probability the old Genoese admiral of that name, who, according to Zurita, and other historians, commanded about that time a squadron,

* Chaufepie's Supp. to Bayle, vol. ii., article COLUMBUS.

† Bossi, Hist. Colom. Illust. No. 7.

with which he conveyed the king of Portugal to the Mediterranean coast of France. As Columbus often sailed under his flag, he may have been with him on these occasions.

The last dubious trace of Columbus, during this obscure period of his life, is given by his son Fernando, who assigns him a distinguished share in a naval exploit of Colombo the younger, nephew to the old admiral just mentioned, who, he affirms, was a famous corsair, so terrible for his deeds against the infidels, that the Moorish mothers used to frighten their unruly children with his name.

This bold rover, having heard of four Venetian galleys richly laden, on their return voyage from Flanders, intercepted them with his squadron on the Portuguese coast, between Lisbon and Cape St. Vincent. A desperate engagement took place ; the vessels grappled each other, and the crews fought hand to hand, and from ship to ship. The battle lasted from morning until evening, with great carnage on both sides. The vessel commanded by Columbus was engaged with a huge

Venetian galley. They threw hand-grenades and other fiery missiles, and the galley was wrapped in flames. The vessels were fastened together by chains and iron grapplings, and could not be separated; both were involved in one conflagration, and soon became a mere blazing mass. The crews threw themselves into the sea; Columbus seized an oar, which was floating within reach, and, being an expert swimmer, attained the shore, though full two leagues distant. It pleased God, adds his son Fernando, to give him strength, that he might preserve him for greater things. After recovering from his exhaustion, he repaired to Lisbon, where he found many of his Genoese countrymen, and was induced to take up his residence*.

Such is the account given by Fernando of his father's first arrival in Portugal; and it has been currently adopted by modern historians. That Columbus may have been in this sea-fight is not impossible, but it took place many years after this period of his life. It is mentioned by several his-

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 5. See Illustrations, article CAPTURE OF THE VENETIAN GALLEYS.

torians, as having occurred in the summer of 1485, which was nearly a year after he had departed from Portugal. The only way of accounting for the error, without impeaching the veracity of the historian, is, to presume that Fernando may have confounded some other action, in which his father was concerned, with this which he found recorded, without date, by Sabellicus.

Waiving, therefore, as somewhat apocryphal, this romantic and heroical arrival of Columbus on the shores of Portugal, we shall find in the great nautical enterprises in which that kingdom was engaged at the time, ample attractions for a person of his character and pursuits. For this purpose, however, it is necessary to cast a glance on certain historical events connected with maritime discovery, which rendered Lisbon, at that moment, the great resort of men skilled in geographical and nautical science, from all parts of the world.

CHAPTER III.

PROGRESS OF DISCOVERY UNDER PRINCE
HENRY OF PORTUGAL.

THE career of modern discovery had commenced shortly before the time of Columbus, and the Atlantic coasts of Africa were at that period the scenes of nautical enterprise. Some have attributed its origin to an incident said to have occurred in the fourteenth century. An Englishman of the name of Macham, flying to France with a lady of whom he was enamoured, was driven far out of sight of land by stress of weather, and after wandering about the high seas, arrived at an unknown and uninhabited island, covered with beautiful forests, which was afterwards called Madeira*. Others have treated this account as a fable, and have pronounced the Canaries to be the first fruits of modern discovery. This famous group, the

* See Illustrations, article DISCOVERY OF MADEIRA.

Fortunate Islands of the ancients, in which they placed their garden of the Hesperides, and from whence Ptolemy commenced to count the longitude, had been long lost to the world.

There are vague accounts, it is true, of their having received casual visits, at wide intervals, during the obscure ages, from the wandering bark of some Arabian, Norman, or Genoese adventurer ; but all this was involved in uncertainty, and led to no beneficial result. It was not until the fourteenth century that they were effectually rediscovered, and restored to mankind. From that time they were occasionally visited by the hardy navigators of various countries. The greatest benefit produced by their discovery was, that the frequent expeditions made to them emboldened mariners to venture far upon the Atlantic, and familiarized them, in some degree, to its dangers.

The grand impulse to discovery was not given by chance, but was the deeply meditated effort of one master mind. This was Prince Henry of Portugal, son of John the First, surnamed the Avenger, and Philippa of Lancaster, sister of Henry the

Fourth of England. The character of this illustrious man, from whose enterprises the genius of Columbus took excitement, deserves particular mention.

At an early age, Prince Henry accompanied his father into Africa, in an expedition against the Moors, in which he planted his victorious banners on the walls of Ceuta. Henry signalized himself repeatedly in this campaign. His passion, however, was more for arts than arms, and he pursued, even amidst the din of war, those inquiries most worthy of a prince.

While at Ceuta, he received much information from the Moors concerning the interior of Africa, and the coast of Guinea—regions unknown to Europeans. He conceived an idea that important discoveries were to be made, by navigating along the western coast of Africa. On returning to Portugal, this idea became his ruling thought. Withdrawing himself from the tumult of a court, he buried himself in retirement, in a country retreat in the Algarves, near to Sagres, in the neighbourhood of Cape St. Vincent, and in full

view of the ocean. Here he drew around him men eminent in science, and prosecuted the study of those branches of knowledge connected with the maritime arts. He was an able mathematician, and made himself master of all the astronomy known to the Arabians of Spain.

On studying the works of the ancients, prince Henry had found what he considered abundant proofs that Africa was circumnavigable; so that it was possible, by keeping along its shores, to arrive at India. He had been struck with the account given of the voyage of Eudoxus of Cyzicus, who was said to have sailed from the Red Sea into the ocean, and to have continued on to Gibraltar; which appeared to be corroborated by the expedition of Hanno the Carthaginian, who, sailing from Gibraltar with a fleet of sixty ships, and following the African coast, was said to have reached the shores of Arabia*. It is true these voyages had been discredited by several ancient writers; and the possibility of circumnavigating Africa, after being for a long time admitted by geogra-

* See Illustrations, article CIRCUMNAVIGATION OF AFRICA BY THE ANCIENTS.

phers, was denied by Hipparchus, and since his time had continued to be disbelieved. He considered each sea as shut up and land-bound in its peculiar basin; and that Africa was a continent continuing onward to the south pole, and surrounding the Indian sea, so as to join Asia beyond the Ganges. This opinion had been adopted and perpetuated by Ptolemy, whose works, in the time of Prince Henry, were the highest authority in geography. Still the prince reverted to the ancient belief, that Africa was circumnavigable, and he found his opinion sanctioned by various learned men of more modern date. To settle this question, and to achieve the circumnavigation of Africa, was an object worthy the ambition of a prince, and his mind was fired with the idea of the vast benefits that would arise to his country should it be accomplished by Portuguese enterprise.

The Italians, or, as they were called in the north of Europe, the Lombards, had long monopolized the opulent trade of Asia. They had formed commercial establishments at Constantinople and in the Black Sea, where they received

the rich produce of the Spice islands, which lie near the equator ; and the silks, the gums, the perfumes, the precious stones, and other luxurious commodities of Egypt and southern Asia, and distributed them over the whole of Europe. The republics of Venice and Genoa rose to power and opulence in consequence of this trade. They had factories in the most remote parts, even in the frozen regions of Moscovy and Norway. Their merchants emulated the magnificence of princes. All Europe was tributary to their commerce. Yet this trade had to be carried on with distant countries of the East, by the most circuitous and expensive routes. It passed through various intermediate hands, and was subjected to the delays and charges of internal navigation, and the tedious and uncertain journeys of the caravan. For a long time, the merchandise of India had to be conveyed by the gulph of Persia, the Euphrates, the Indus, and the Oxus, to the Caspian and the Mediterranean seas ; thence to take a new destination for the various marts of Europe. After the Soldan of Egypt had conquered the Arabs, and restored

trade to its ancient channel, it was still attended with great cost and delay. Its precious commodities had to be conveyed by the Red Sea ; thence on camels backs to the banks of the Nile, whence they were transported to Egypt, to meet the Italian merchants. Thus, while the opulent traffic of the East was engrossed by these adventurous monopolists, the price of every article was enhanced by the great expense of transportation.

It was the grand idea of Prince Henry, by circumnavigating Africa, to open a direct and easy route to the source of this commerce, to turn it suddenly into a new and simple channel, and to pour it out in a golden tide upon his country. Henry, however, was before the age in thought. He had to counteract the ignorance and prejudices of mankind, and to endure the delays to which vivid and penetrating minds are subjected, from the tardy co-operations of the dull and the doubtful. The navigation of the Atlantic was yet in its infancy, and, however some might have ventured a little way upon it, still mariners looked with distrust upon a boisterous expanse, which appeared

to have no opposite shore. In their voyages they still kept close to the coast, fearful of venturing out of sight of those land-marks which guided their timid navigation. Every bold head-land, and far-stretching promontory, was a wall to bar their progress. They crept timorously along the Barbary shores, and thought they had accomplished a wonderful expedition when they had ventured a few degrees beyond the Straits of Gibraltar. Cape Non, the termination of ancient enterprise, was long the limit of their daring ; they hesitated to double its rocky point, beaten by winds and waves, and threatening to thrust them forth upon the raging deep.

Independent of these vague fears, they had others, sanctioned by philosophy itself. The ancient theory of the zones was currently believed. They still thought that the earth, at the equator, was girdled by a torrid zone, over which the sun held his vertical and fiery course, separating the hemispheres by a region of impassive heat. The credulous seamen fancied Cape Bojador the utmost boundary of secure enterprise. They had a

superstitious belief, that whoever doubled it would never return *. They looked with dismay upon the rapid currents of its neighbourhood, and the furious surf which beats upon its arid coast. They imagined beyond it the frightful region of the torrid zone, scorched by a blazing sun, a region of fire, where the very waves, which beat upon the shores, boiled under the intolerable fervour of the heavens.

To dispel these errors, and to give a scope to navigation, equal to the grandeur of his designs, Prince Henry called in the aid of science. He established a naval college, and erected an observatory at Sagres, and he invited thither the most eminent professors of the nautical faculties; appointing as president James of Mallorca, a man learned in navigation, and skilful in making charts and instruments.

The effects of this establishment were soon apparent. All that was known relative to geography and navigation was gathered together and reduced to system. A vast improvement took

* Mariana, Hist. Esp., lib. ii., cap. 22.

place in maps. The compass was also brought into more general use, especially among the Portuguese, rendering the mariner more bold and venturesome, by enabling him to navigate in the most gloomy day, and in the darkest night. Encouraged by these advantages, and stimulated by the munificence of Prince Henry, the Portuguese marine became signalised for the hardihood of its enterprises, and the extent of its discoveries. Cape Bojador was doubled, the region of the tropics penetrated, and divested of its fancied terrors ; the greater part of the African coast, from Cape Blanco to Cape de Verde, explored, and the Cape de Verde and Azore islands, which lay three hundred leagues distant from the continent, were rescued from the oblivious empire of the ocean.

To secure the quiet prosecution and full enjoyment of his discoveries, Henry obtained the protection of a papal bull, granting to the crown of Portugal sovereign authority over all the lands it might discover in the Atlantic, to India inclusive, with plenary indulgence to all

who should die in these expeditions ; at the same time menacing, with the terrors of the church, all who should interfere in these Christian conquests*.

Henry died on the 13th of November, 1473, without accomplishing the great object of his ambition. It was not until many years afterwards, that Vasquez de Gama, pursuing with a Portuguese fleet the track he had pointed out, realised his anticipations by doubling the Cape of Good Hope, sailing along the southern coast of India, and thus opening a high-way for commerce to the opulent regions of the East. Henry, however, lived long enough to reap some of the richest rewards of a great and good mind. He beheld, through his means, his native country in a grand and active career of prosperity. The discoveries of the Portuguese were the wonder and admiration of the fifteenth century, and Portugal, from being one of the least among nations, suddenly rose to be one of the most important.

All this was effected, not by arms, but by arts ; not by the stratagems of a cabinet, but by the

* Vasconcelez, Hist. de Juan II.

wisdom of a college. It was the great achievement of a prince, who has well been described “full of thoughts of lofty enterprise, and acts of generous spirit :” one, who bore for his device the magnanimous motto, “The talent to do good,” the only talent worthy the ambition of princes *.

Henry, at his death, left it in charge to his country to prosecute the route to India. He had formed companies and associations, by which commercial zeal was enlisted in the cause, and it was made a matter of interest and competition to enterprising individuals †. From time to time Lisbon was thrown into a tumult of excitement by the launching forth of some new expedition, or the return of a squadron with accounts of new tracts explored, and new kingdoms visited. Every thing was confident promise, and sanguine anticipation. The miserable hordes of the African coast were magnified into powerful nations, and the voyagers continually heard of opulent countries farther on. It was as yet the twilight of

* Joam de Barros, Asia. decad. 1.

† Lafitan, Conquêtes des Portugais, t. i., l. 1.

geographic knowledge ; imagination went hand in hand with discovery, and as the latter groped its slow and cautious way, the former peopled all beyond with wonders. The fame of the Portuguese discoveries, and of the expeditions continually setting out, drew the attention of the world. Strangers from all parts, the learned, the curious, and the adventurous, resorted to Lisbon to inquire into the particulars or to participate in the advantages of these enterprises. Among these was Christopher Columbus, whether thrown there, as has been asserted, by the fortuitous result of a desperate adventure, or drawn thither by liberal curiosity, and the pursuit of honourable fortune *.

* Herrera, decad. I., lib. 1.

CHAPTER IV.

RESIDENCE OF COLUMBUS AT LISBON. IDEAS
CONCERNING ISLANDS IN THE OCEAN.

COLUMBUS arrived at Lisbon about the year 1470. He was at that time in the full vigour of manhood, and of an engaging presence. Minute descriptions are given of his person by his son Fernando, by Las Casas, and others of his contemporaries *. According to these accounts, he was tall, well-formed, muscular, and of an elevated and dignified demeanour. His visage was long, and neither full nor meagre ; his complexion fair and freckled and inclined to ruddy ; his nose aquiline ; his cheek-bones were rather high, his eyes light grey, and apt to enkindle ; his whole countenance had an air of authority. His hair, in his youthful days, was of a light colour ; but care and trouble, according to Las Casas, soon turned it grey, and

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 3. Las Casas, Hist. Ind., l. i., c. 2. MS.

at thirty years of age it was quite white. He was moderate and simple in diet and apparel, eloquent in discourse, engaging and affable with strangers, and of an amiableness and suavity in domestic life that strongly attached his household to his person. His temper was naturally irritable * ; but he subdued it by the magnanimity of his spirit, comporting himself with a courteous and gentle gravity, and never indulging in any intemperance of language. Throughout his life he was noted for a strict attention to the offices of religion, observing rigorously the fasts and ceremonies of the church ; nor did his piety consist in mere forms, but partook of that lofty and solemn enthusiasm with which his whole character was strongly tinctured.

While at Lisbon, he was accustomed to attend religious service at the chapel of the convent of All Saints. In this convent there were certain ladies of rank, either resident as boarders, or in some religious capacity. With one of these, Doña Felipa Moñis de Palestrello, Columbus be-

* Illescas, Hist. Pontifical. l. vi.

came acquainted. She was the daughter of Bartolomeo Moñis de Palestrello, an Italian cavalier, who had been one of the most distinguished navigators under Prince Henry, and had colonized and governed the island of Porto Santo. The acquaintance soon ripened into attachment, and ended in marriage. It appears to have been a match of mere affection, as the lady was destitute of fortune.

This union fixed Columbus at Lisbon. The father of his wife being dead, the newly married couple went to reside with the mother. The latter, perceiving the interest which her son-in-law took in all matters concerning the sea, related to him all she knew of the voyages and expeditions of her late husband, and brought him all his papers, charts, journals, and memorandums*. These were treasures to Columbus. He acquainted himself with all the routes of the Portuguese, their plans and conceptions ; and having, by his marriage and residence, become naturalized in Portugal, he sailed occasionally in the expeditions

* Oviedo, *Cronica de los Indias*, l. ii., c. 2.

to the coast of Guinea. When on shore, his time was occupied in making maps and charts for the support of his family. His circumstances were limited, and he had to observe a strict economy: yet we are told that he appropriated a part of his scanty means to the succour of his aged father at Genoa, and to the education of his younger brothers*.

The construction of a correct map or chart, in those days, required a degree of knowledge and experience sufficient to entitle the possessor to distinction. Geography was but just emerging from the darkness which had enveloped it for ages. Ptolemy was still a standard authority. The maps of the fifteenth century display a mixture of truth and error, in which facts handed down from antiquity, and others revealed by recent discoveries, are confused with popular fables, and extravagant conjectures. At such a period, when the passion for maritime discovery was seeking every aid to facilitate its enterprises, the knowledge and skill of an able cosmographer, like Columbus, would be properly appreciated,

* Munoz, *Hist. del N. Mundo*, l. ii.

and the superior correctness of his maps and charts would give him notoriety among men of science*. We accordingly find him, at an early period of his residence in Lisbon, in correspondence with Paulo Toscanelli, of Florence, one of the most scientific men of the day, whose communications had great influence in inspiring him to his subsequent undertakings.

While his geographical labours thus elevated him to a communion with the learned, they were peculiarly calculated to foster a train of thoughts favourable to nautical enterprise. From constantly comparing maps and charts, and noting the progress and direction of discovery, he was

* The importance which began to be attached to cosmographical knowledge is evident from the distinction which Mauro, an Italian friar, obtained from having projected an universal map, esteemed the most accurate of the time. A fac simile of this map, upon the same scale as the original, is now deposited in the British Museum, and it has been published, with a geographical commentary, by the learned Zurla. The Venetians struck a medal in honour of him, on which they denominated him *Cosmographus incomparabilis* (*Colline del Bussol. Naut. p. 2., c. 5.*) Yet Ramusio, who had seen this map in the monastery of Santo Michele de Murano, considers it merely an improved copy of a map brought from Cathay by Marco Polo (Ramusio, t. ii., p. 17. Ed. Venet. 1606.) We are told also that Americus Vespuccius paid one hundred and thirty ducats (equivalent to five hundred and fifty-five dollars in our time) for a map of sea and land, made at Mallorca, in 1439, by Gabriel de Valesca (Barros, D. I. i., c. 15. *Terroto por Cofino, Intend.* p. 25.)

led to perceive how much of the world remained unknown, and to meditate on the means of exploring it. His domestic concerns, and the connexions he had formed by marriage, were calculated to foster this vein of speculation. He resided for some time at the recently-discovered island of Porto Santo, where his wife had inherited some property, and during his residence there she bore him a son, whom he named Diego. This residence brought him, as it were, on the very frontier of discovery. His wife's sister was married to Pedro Correo, a navigator of note, who had at one time been governor of Porto Santo. Being frequently together in the familiar intercourse of domestic life, their conversation naturally turned upon the discoveries prosecuting in their vicinity along the African coasts; upon the long sought for route to India; and upon the possibility of some unknown lands existing in the west.

In their island residence, too, they must have been frequently visited by the voyagers going to and from Guinea. Living thus, surrounded

by the stir and bustle of discovery, communing with persons who had risen by it to fortune and honour, and voyaging in the very tracks of its recent triumphs, the ardent mind of Columbus kindled up to enthusiasm in the cause. It was a period of general excitement to all who were connected with maritime life, or who resided in the vicinity of the ocean. The recent discoveries had inflamed their imaginations, and had filled them with visions of other islands, of greater wealth and beauty, yet to be discovered in the boundless wastes of the Atlantic. The opinions and fancies of the ancients on the subject were again put into circulation. The story of Antilla, a great island in the ocean, discovered by the Carthaginians, was frequently cited, and Plato's imaginary Atalantis once more found firm believers. Many thought that the Canaries and Azores were but wrecks which had survived its submersion, and that other and larger fragments of that drowned land might yet exist, in remoter parts of the Atlantic.

One of the strongest symptoms of the excited

state of the popular mind at this eventful era, was the prevalence of rumours respecting unknown islands casually seen in the ocean. Many of these were mere fables, fabricated to feed the predominant humour of the public; many had their origin in the self-deception of voyagers, whose heated imaginations beheld islands in those summer clouds which lie along the horizon, and often beguile the sailor with the idea of distant lands.

One Antonio Leone, an inhabitant of Madeira, told Columbus that sailing westward one hundred leagues, he had seen three islands at a distance. But the tales of the kind most positively advanced and zealously maintained, were those related by the people of the Canaries, who were long under a singular optical delusion. They imagined that, from time to time, they beheld a vast island to the westward, with lofty mountains and deep valleys. Nor was it seen in cloudy and dubious weather, but in those clear days common to tropical climates, and with all the distinctness with which distant objects may be discerned in their

pure, transparent atmosphere. The island, it is true, was only seen at intervals : while at other times, and in the clearest weather, not a vestige of it was to be descried. When it did appear, however, it was always in the same place, and under the same form. So persuaded were the inhabitants of the Canaries of its reality, that application was made to the king of Portugal for permission to discover and take possession of it; and it actually became the object of several expeditions. The island, however, was never to be found, though it still continued occasionally to cheat the eye.

There were all kinds of wild and fantastic notions concerning this imaginary land. Some supposed it to be the Antilla mentioned by Aristotle; others, the Island of Seven Cities, so called from an ancient legend of seven Bishops, who, with a multitude of followers, fled from Spain at the time of its conquest by the Moors, and, guided by Heaven to some unknown island in the ocean, founded on it seven splendid cities. While some considered it another legendary island, on which,

it was said a Scottish priest of the name of St. Brandan had landed, in the sixth century. This last legend passed into current belief. The fancied island was called by the name of St. Brandan, or St. Borondon, and long continued to be actually laid down in maps far to the west of the Canaries*. The same was done with the fabulous island of Antilla ; and these erroneous maps, and phantom islands, have given rise at various times to assertions, that the New World had been known prior to the period of its generally reputed discovery.

Columbus, however, considers all these appearances of land as mere illusions. He supposes that they may have been caused by rocks lying in the ocean, which, seen at a distance, under certain atmospherical influences, may have assumed the appearance of islands ; or that they may have been floating islands, such as are mentioned by Pliny and Seneca and others, formed of twisted roots, or of a light and porous stone, and

* See Illustrations, article ISLAND OF ST. BRANDAN.

covered with trees, and which may have been driven about the ocean by the winds.

The islands of St. Brandan, of Antilla, and of the Seven Cities, have long since proved to be fabulous tales, or atmospherical delusions. Yet the rumours concerning them derive interest, from showing the state of public thought with respect to the Atlantic, while its western regions were yet unknown. They were all noted down with curious care by Columbus, and may have had some influence over his imagination. Still, though of a visionary spirit, his penetrating genius sought in deeper sources for the aliment of its meditations. Aroused by the impulse of passing events, he turned anew, says his son Fernando, to study the geographical authors which he had read before, and to consider the astronomical reasons which might corroborate the theory gradually forming in his mind. He made himself acquainted with all that had been written by the ancients, or discovered by the moderns, relative to geography. His own voyages enabled him to correct many of their errors, and appreciate many

of their theories. His genius having thus taken its decided bent, it is interesting to notice from what a mass of acknowledged facts, rational hypotheses, fanciful narrations, and popular rumours, his grand project of discovery was wrought out by the strong workings of his vigorous mind.

CHAPTER V.

GROUNDS ON WHICH COLUMBUS FOUNDED HIS
BELIEF OF THE EXISTENCE OF UNDIS-
COVERED LANDS IN THE WEST.

IT has been attempted, in the preceding chapters, to show how Columbus was gradually kindled up to his grand design by the spirit and events of the times in which he lived. His son Fernando, however, undertakes to furnish the precise data on which his father's plan of discovery was founded*. "He does this," he observes, "to show from what slender argument so great a scheme was fabricated and brought to light; and for the purpose of satisfying those who may desire to know distinctly the circumstances and motives which led his father to undertake this enterprise."

As this statement was formed from notes and documents found among his father's papers, it is too curious and interesting not to deserve parti-

* Hist. del Almirante, c. 6, 7, 8.

cular mention. In this memorandum he arranged the foundation of his father's theory under three heads: 1. The nature of things. 2. The authority of learned writers. 3. The reports of navigators.

Under the first head, he set down as a fundamental principle, that the earth was a terraqueous sphere or globe, which might be travelled round from east to west, and that men stood foot to foot, when on opposite points. The circumference from east to west, at the equator, Columbus divided, according to Ptolemy, into twenty-four hours of fifteen degrees each, making three hundred and sixty degrees. Of these he imagined, comparing the globe of Ptolemy with the earlier map of Marinus of Tyre, that fifteen hours had been known to the ancients, extending from the Straits of Gibraltar, or rather from the Canary Islands, to the city of Thinæ in Asia, a place set down as at the eastern limits of the known world. The Portuguese had advanced the western frontier by the discovery of the Azores and Cape de Verde Islands, equal to one hour more. There remained, ac-

cording to the estimation of Columbus, eight hours, or one-third of the circumference of the earth, unknown and unexplored. This space might, in a great measure, be filled up by the eastern regions of Asia, which might extend so far as nearly to surround the globe, and to approach the western shores of Europe and Africa. The tract of ocean, intervening between these continents, he observes, would be less than might at first be supposed, if the opinion of Alfranganus, the Arabian, were admitted, who gave to the earth a smaller circumference, by diminishing the size of the degrees, than did other cosmographers ; a theory to which Columbus seems at times to have given faith. Granting these premises, it was manifest, that, by pursuing a direct course from east to west, a navigator would arrive at the extremity of Asia, and discover any intervening land.

Under the second head, are named the authors whose writings had weight in convincing him that the intervening ocean could be but of moderate expanse, and easy to be traversed. Among these,

he cites the opinion of Aristotle, Seneca, and Pliny, that one might pass from Cadiz to the Indies in a few days ; of Strabo, also, who observes, that the ocean surrounds the earth, bathing on the east the shores of India ; on the west, the coasts of Spain and Mauritania ; so that it is easy to navigate from one to the other on the same parallel*.

In corroboration of the idea, that Asia, or, as he always terms it, India, stretched far to the east, so as to occupy the greater part of the unexplored space, the narratives are cited of Marco Polo and John Mandeville. These travellers had visited, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the remote parts of Asia, far beyond the regions laid down by Ptolemy ; and their accounts of the extent of that continent to the eastward, had a great effect in convincing Columbus that a voyage to the west, of no long duration, would bring him to its shores, or to the extensive and wealthy islands which lie adjacent. The information concerning Marco Polo, is probably derived from Paulo Toscanelli, a cele-

* Strab. Cos. I. i. ii.

brated doctor of Florence, already mentioned, with whom Columbus corresponded in 1474, and who transmitted to him a copy of a letter which he had previously written to Fernando Martinez, a learned canon of Lisbon. This letter maintains the facility of arriving at India by a western course, asserting the distance to be but four thousand miles, in a direct line from Lisbon to the province of Mangi, near Cathay, since determined to be the northern coast of China. Of this country he gives a magnificent description, drawn from the work of Marco Polo. He adds, that in the route lay the islands of Antilla and Cipango, distant from each other only two hundred and twenty-five leagues, abounding in riches, and offering convenient places for ships to touch at, and obtain supplies on the voyage.

Under the third head, are enumerated various indications of land in the west, which had floated to the shores of the known world. It is curious to observe, how, when once the mind of Columbus had become heated in the inquiry, it attracted to it every corroborating circumstance, however vague

and trivial. He appears to have been particularly attentive to the gleams of information derived from veteran mariners, who had been employed in the recent voyages to the African coasts ; and also from the inhabitants of lately discovered islands, placed, in a manner, on the frontier posts of geographical knowledge. All these are carefully noted down among his memorandums, to be collocated with the facts and opinions already stored up in his mind.

Such, for instance, is the circumstance related to him by Martin Vicenti, a pilot in the service of the King of Portugal ; that, after sailing four hundred and fifty leagues to the west of Cape St. Vincent, he had taken from the water a piece of carved wood, which evidently had not been laboured with an iron instrument. As the winds had drifted it from the west, it might have come from some unknown land in that direction.

Pedro Correa, brother-in-law of Columbus, is likewise cited, as having seen, on the island of Porto Santo, a similar piece of wood, which had drifted from the same quarter. He had heard

also from the King of Portugal, that reeds of an immense size had floated to some of those islands from the west, in the description of which, Columbus thought he recognized the immense reeds said by Ptolemy to grow in India.

Information is likewise noted, given him by the inhabitants of the Azores, of trunks of huge pine-trees, of a kind that did not grow upon any of the islands, wafted to their shores by the westerly winds ; but especially of the bodies of two dead men, cast upon the island of Flores, whose features differed from those of any known race of people.

To these is added the report of a mariner of the port of St. Mary, who asserted that, in the course of a voyage to Ireland, he had seen land to the west, which the ship's company took for some extreme part of Tartary. Other stories, of a similar kind, are noted, as well as rumours concerning the fancied islands of St. Brandan, and of the Seven Cities, to which, as has already been observed, Columbus gave but little faith.

Such is an abstract of the grounds, on which, according to Fernando, his father proceeded from

one position to another, until he came to the conclusion, that there was undiscovered land in the western part of the ocean; that it was attainable; that it was fertile; and finally, that it was inhabited.

It is evident, that several of the facts herein enumerated, must have become known to Columbus after he had formed his opinion, and merely served to strengthen it; still, every thing that throws any light upon the process of thought, which led to so great an event, is of the highest interest; and the chain of deductions here furnished, though not perhaps the most logical in its concatenation, yet, being extracted from the papers of Columbus himself, remains one of the most interesting documents in the history of the human mind.

On considering this statement attentively, it is apparent that the grand argument which induced Columbus to his enterprise, was that placed under the first head, namely, that the most eastern part of Asia known to the ancients, could not be separated from the Azores by more than a third of the circumference of the globe; that the intervening

space must, in a great measure, be filled up by the unknown residue of Asia ; and that, as the circumference of the world was less than was generally supposed, the Asiatic shores could easily be attained by a moderate voyage to the west.

It is singular how much the success of this great undertaking depended upon two happy errors, the imaginary extent of Asia to the east, and the supposed smallness of the earth ; both, errors of the most learned and profound philosophers, but without which Columbus would hardly have ventured upon his enterprise. As to the idea of finding land by sailing directly to the west, it is at present so familiar to our minds, as in some measure to diminish the merits of the first conception, and the hardihood of the first attempt : but in those days, as has well been observed, the circumference of the earth was yet unknown ; no one could tell whether the ocean were not of immense extent, impossible to be traversed ; nor were the laws of specific gravity and of central gravitation ascertained, by which, granting the rotundity of the earth, the possibility of making the tour of it would be

manifest*. The practicability, therefore, of finding land by sailing to the west, was one of those mysteries of nature which are considered incredible whilst matters of mere speculation, but the simplest things imaginable when they have once been ascertained.

When Columbus had formed his theory, it became fixed in his mind with singular firmness, and influenced his entire character and conduct. He never spoke in doubt or hesitation, but with as much certainty as if his eyes had beheld the promised land. No trial nor disappointment could afterwards divert him from the steady pursuit of his object. A deep religious sentiment mingled with his meditations, and gave them at times a tinge of superstition, but it was of a sublime and lofty kind : he looked upon himself as standing in the hand of heaven, chosen from among men for the accomplishment of its high purpose ; he read, as he supposed, his contemplated discovery foretold in Holy Writ, and shadowed forth darkly

* Malte-Brun, Géographie Universelle, t. xiv. Note sur le Découverte de l'Amérique.

in the mystic revelations of the prophets. The ends of the earth were to be brought together, and all nations, and tongues, and languages united under the banners of the Redeemer. This was to be the triumphant consummation of his enterprise, bringing the remote and unknown regions of the earth into communion with Christian Europe ; carrying the light of the true faith into benighted and Pagan lands, and gathering their countless nations under the holy dominion of the church.

The enthusiastic nature of his conceptions gave an elevation to his spirit, and a dignity and loftiness to his whole demeanour. He conferred with sovereigns almost with a feeling of equality. His views were princely and unbounded ; his proposed discovery was of empires ; his conditions were proportionally magnificent ; nor would he ever, even after long delays, repeated disappointments, and under the pressure of actual penury, abate what appeared to be extravagant demands for a mere possible discovery.

Those who could not conceive how an ardent

and comprehensive genius could arrive, by presumptive evidence, at so firm a conviction, sought for other modes of accounting for it. When the glorious result had established the correctness of the opinion of Columbus, attempts were made to prove that he had obtained previous information of the lands which he pretended to discover. Among these, was an idle tale of a tempest-tossed pilot, said to have died in his house, bequeathing him written accounts of an unknown land in the west, upon which he had been driven by adverse winds. This story, according to Fernando Columbus, had no other foundation than one of the popular tales about the shadowy island of St. Brandan, which a Portuguese captain, returning from Guinea, fancied he had beheld beyond Madeira. It circulated for a time in idle rumour, altered and shaped to suit their purposes, by such as sought to tarnish the glory of Columbus. At length, it found its way into print, and has been echoed by various historians, varying with every narration, and full of contradictions and improbabilities*.

* See Illustrations, article RUMOUR CONCERNING THE PILOT WHO DIED IN THE HOUSE OF COLUMBUS.

An assertion has also been made, that Columbus was preceded in his discoveries by Martin Behem, a contemporary cosmographer, who, it was said, had landed accidentally on the coast of South America, in the course of an African expedition ; and that it was with the assistance of a map, or globe, projected by Behem, on which was laid down the newly-discovered country, that Columbus made his voyage. This rumour originated in an absurd misconstruction of a Latin manuscript, and was unsupported by any documents : yet it has had its circulation, and has even been revived not many years since, with more zeal than discretion ; but is now completely refuted and put to rest. The land visited by Behem, was the coast of Africa beyond the equator ; the globe he projected was finished in 1492, while Columbus was absent on his first voyage : it contains no trace of the New World, and thus furnishes conclusive proof, that its existence was yet unknown to Behem*.

There is a certain meddlesome spirit, which, in

* See Illustrations, article BEHEM.

the garb of learned research, goes prying about the traces of history, casting down its monuments, and marring and mutilating its fairest trophies. Care should be taken to vindicate great names from such pernicious erudition. It defeats one of the most salutary purposes of history, that of furnishing examples of what human genius and laudable enterprise may accomplish. For this purpose, some pains have been taken in the preceding chapters, to trace the rise and progress of this grand idea in the mind of Columbus; to show that it was the conception of his genius, quickened by the impulse of the age, and aided by those scattered gleams of knowledge, which fell ineffectually upon ordinary minds.

CHAPTER VI.

CORRESPONDENCE OF COLUMBUS WITH PAULO TOSCANELLI. EVENTS IN PORTUGAL RELATIVE TO DISCOVERIES.

As early as 1474, Columbus had conceived the design of seeking a western route to India, though as yet it lay crude and unmatured in his mind. This appears from the correspondence already mentioned with the learned Paulo Toscanelli of Florence, which took place in the summer of that year. The letter of Toscanelli is in reply to one from Columbus, and applauds the design which he had expressed of making a voyage to the west. To demonstrate more clearly the facility of arriving at India in that direction, he sent him a map, projected partly according to Ptolemy, and partly according to the descriptions of Marco Polo, the Venetian. The eastern coast of Asia was depicted in front of the western

coasts of Africa and Europe, with a moderate space of ocean between them, in which were placed at convenient distances Cipango, Antilla, and the other islands *. Columbus was greatly animated by the letter and chart of Toscanelli, who was considered one of the ablest cosmographers of the day. He appears to have procured the work of Marco Polo, which had been translated into various languages, and existed in manuscript in most libraries. This author gives marvellous accounts of the riches of the realms of Cathay and Mangi, or Mangu, since ascertained to be Northern and Southern China, on the coast of which, according to the map of Toscanelli, a voyager sailing directly west would be sure to arrive. He describes in unmeasured terms the power and grandeur of the sovereign of these countries, the great Khan of Tartary, and the splendour and magnitude of his capitals

* This map, by which Columbus sailed on his first voyage of discovery, Las Casas (l. i. cap. 12.) says he had in his possession at the time of writing his history. It is greatly to be regretted that so interesting a document should be lost. It may yet exist amidst the chartic lumber of the Spanish Archives. Few documents of mere curiosity would be more precious.

of Cambaln and Quinsai, and the wonders of the island of Cipango or Zipangi, supposed to be Japan. This island he places opposite Cathay, five hundred leagues in the ocean. He represents it as abounding in gold, precious stones, and other choice objects of commerce, with a monarch whose palace was covered with plates of gold, as in other countries palaces are covered with lead. The narrations of this traveller were by many considered fabulous; but though they are full of splendid exaggerations, they have since been found to be substantially correct. They are thus particularly noted, from the influence they had over the imagination of Columbus.

The work of Marco Polo is a key to many parts of his history. In his applications to the various courts, he represented the countries he expected to discover as those regions of inexhaustible wealth which the Venetian had described. The territories of the grand Khan were the objects of research in all his voyages; and in his cruisings among the Antilles, he was continually flattering himself with the hopes of ar-

riving at the opulent island of Cipango, and the coasts of Mangi and Cathay*.

While the design of attempting the discovery in the west was maturing in the mind of Columbus, he made a voyage to the north of Europe. Of this we have no other memorial than the following passage, extracted by his son from one of his letters :—“ In the year 1477, in February, I navigated one hundred leagues beyond Thule, the southern part of which is seventy-three degrees distant from the equator, and not sixty-three, as some pretend; neither is it situated within the line which includes the west of Ptolemy, but is much more westerly. The English, principally those of Bristol, go with their merchandise to this island, which is as large as England. When I was there, the sea was not frozen, and the tides were so great as to rise and fall twenty-six fathom†.”

The island thus mentioned as Thule is gene-

* A more particular account of Marco Polo and his writings is given among the Illustrations.

† Hist. del Almirante, c. 4.

rally supposed to have been Iceland, which is far to the west of the Ultima Thule of the ancients, as laid down in the map of Ptolemy. Nothing more is known of this voyage, in which we discern indications of that ardent and impatient desire to break away from the limits of the old world, and launch into the unknown regions of the ocean.

Several more years elapsed, without any decided efforts on the part of Columbus to carry his design into execution. He was too poor to fit out the armament necessary for so important an expedition. Indeed, as he expected to find vast and heathen countries, unsubjected to any lawful power, he considered it to be an enterprise only to be undertaken in the employ of some sovereign state, which could assume dominion over the territories he might discover, and reward him with dignities and privileges commensurate to his services.

During the latter part of the reign of Alphonso of Portugal, there was too little ardour in the cause of discovery, to make it probable that

a proposition of the kind would be accepted. The monarch was too much engrossed with the wars with Spain, for the succession of the Princess Juana to the crown of Castile, to engage in peaceful enterprises of an expensive nature. The public mind, also, was not prepared for so perilous an undertaking. Notwithstanding the many voyages which had been made to the coast of Africa and the adjacent islands, and that the compass had been introduced into more general use, navigation was still shackled with impediments, and the mariner rarely ventured far out of sight of land.

Discovery advanced slowly along the coasts of Africa, and the mariners feared to cruise far into the southern hemisphere, with the stars of which they were totally unacquainted. To such men, the project of a voyage directly westward, into the midst of that boundless waste, to seek some visionary land, appeared as extravagant as it would at the present day to launch forth in a balloon into the regions of space, in quest of some distant star.

The time, however, was at hand, that was to extend the power of navigation. The era was propitious to the quick advancement of knowledge. The recent invention of the art of printing enabled men to communicate rapidly and extensively their ideas and discoveries. It drew forth learning from libraries and convents, and brought it familiarly to the reading-desk of the student. Volumes of information, which before had existed only in costly manuscripts, carefully treasured up, and kept out of the reach of the indigent scholar and obscure artist, were now in every hand. There was, henceforth, to be no retrogression in knowledge, nor any pause in its career. Every step in advance, was immediately, and simultaneously, and widely promulgated, recorded in a thousand forms, and fixed for ever. There could never again be a dark age; nations might shut their eyes to the light, and sit in wilful darkness, but they could not trample it out; it would still shine on, dispensed to happier parts of the world, by the diffusive powers of the press.

At this juncture, a monarch ascended the

throne of Portugal, of different ambition from Alphonso. John II. had imbibed the passion for discovery from his grand uncle Prince Henry, and with his reign all its activity revived. His first care was to build a fort at St. George de la Mina, on the coast of Guinea, to protect the trade carried on in that neighbourhood for gold dust, ivory, and slaves.

The African discoveries had conferred great glory upon Portugal, but as yet they had produced more expense than profit. The accomplishment of the route to India, however, it was expected would repay all their cost and toil, and open a source of incalculable wealth to the nation. The project of Prince Henry, which had now been tardily prosecuted for half a century, had excited an eager curiosity about the remote parts of Asia, and had revived all the accounts, true and fabulous, of travellers.

Beside the marvellous work of Marco Polo, already mentioned, there was the narrative of Rabbi Benjamin ben Jonah, of Tudela, a celebrated Spanish Jew, who had set out from Sar-

gossa in 1173, to visit the scattered remnants of the Hebrew tribes, wherever dispersed over the face of the earth. Wandering with unwearied zeal on this pious errand, over most parts of the known world, he penetrated into China, and passed from thence into the southern islands of Asia*. There were also the narratives of Carpini and Ascelin, two friars, despatched, the one in 1246, the other in 1247, by Pope Innocent IV., as apostolic ambassadors, for the purpose of converting the Grand Khan of Tartary ; and the journal of William Rubruquis, (or Ruysbrook) a celebrated Cordelier, sent on a similar errand in 1253, by Louis IX. of France, then on his unfortunate crusade into Palestine. These pious but chimerical missions had proved abortive ; but the curious narrations of them which remained, when thus revived in the fifteenth century, served to inflame the public curiosity respecting the remote parts of Asia.

* Bergeron, *Voyages en Asie*, tom. i. The work of Benjamin of Tudela, originally written in Hebrew, was so much in repute, that the translation went through sixteen editions. Andres, *Hist. B. Let.*, ii. c. 6.

In these narrations we first find mention made of the renowned Prester John, an imaginary christian king, said to hold sway in a remote part of the East, who was long an object of curiosity and research, but whose kingdom seemed to shift its situation in the tale of every traveller, and to vanish from the search as effectually as the unsubstantial island of St. Brandon. All the fables and dreamy speculations, concerning this shadowy potentate and his oriental realm, were again put in circulation. It was fancied that traces of his empire were discovered in the interior of Africa, to the east of Benin, where there was a powerful prince, who used a cross among the insignia of royalty. John II. partook largely of the popular excitement produced by these narrations. In the early part of his reign he actually sent missions in quest of the visionary Prester John, to visit whose dominions became the romantic desire of many a religious enthusiast. The magnificent idea he had formed of the remote parts of the East, made him extremely anxious that the splendid project of Prince Henry should be realized, and that the

Portuguese flag should penetrate to the Indian seas. Impatient of the slowness with which his discoveries advanced along the coast of Africa, and of the impediments which every cape and promontory presented to nautical enterprise, he called in the aid of science to devise some means by which greater scope and certainty might be given to navigation. His two physicians, Roderigo and Joseph, the latter a Jew, the most able astronomers and cosmographers of his kingdom, together with the celebrated Martin Behem, entered into a learned consultation on the subject. The result of their conferences and labours was the application of the astrolabe to navigation, enabling the seaman, by the altitude of the sun, to ascertain his distance from the equator*. This instrument has since been improved and modified into the modern quadrant, of which, even at its first introduction, it possessed all the essential advantages.

It is impossible to describe the effect produced upon navigation by this invention. It cast it loose at once from its long bondage to the land,

* Barros. decad. 1., lib. iv., c. 2. Maffei, l. vi., p. 6 and 7.

and set it free to rove the deep. Science had thus prepared guides for discovery across the trackless ocean. Instead of coasting the shores like the ancient navigators, and, when driven from the land, groping his way back in doubt and apprehension by the uncertain guidance of the stars, the modern mariner might adventure boldly into unknown seas, confident of being able to retrace his course, by means of the compass and the astrolabe, should he find no distant port.

CHAPTER VII.

PROPOSITIONS OF COLUMBUS TO THE COURT OF PORTUGAL.

THE application of the astrolabe to navigation, was one of those timely events which seem to have something providential in them. It was the one thing wanting to facilitate an intercourse across the deep, and it divested the enterprise of Columbus of that hazardous character which was so great an obstacle to its accomplishment. It was immediately after this event, that he proposed his voyage of discovery to the crown of Portugal.

This is the first proposition of which we have any clear and indisputable record, although it has been strongly asserted that he made one at an earlier period to his native country, Genoa. The court of Portugal had shewn extraordinary liberality in rewarding nautical enterprise. Most of those who had made discoveries in her service,

had been appointed to the government of the islands and countries which they had discovered, although many of them were foreigners by birth. Encouraged by this liberality, and by the anxiety evinced by King John II. to accomplish a passage by sea to India, Columbus obtained an audience of that monarch. He proposed, in case the king would furnish him with ships and men, to undertake a shorter and more direct route to India, than that which they were seeking. His plan was to strike directly to the west, across the Atlantic. He then unfolded his hypothesis with respect to the extent of Asia, describing also the immense riches of the island of Cipango, the first land at which he expected to arrive. Of this audience, we have two accounts, written in somewhat of an opposite spirit; one by his son Fernando, the other by Joam de Barros, the Portuguese historian. It is curious to notice the different views taken of the same transaction by the enthusiastic son, and by the cool, perhaps prejudiced, historian.

The king, according to Fernando, listened to

his father with great attention, but was discouraged from engaging in any new scheme of the kind, by the cost and trouble already sustained in exploring the route by the African coast, which as yet remained unaccomplished. His father, however, supported his proposition by such excellent reasons, that the king was induced to give his consent. The only difficulty that remained was the terms ; for Columbus, being a man of lofty and noble sentiments, demanded high and honourable titles and rewards, to the end, says Fernando, that he might leave behind him a name and family worthy of his deeds and merits *.

Barros, on the other hand, attributes the seeming acquiescence of the king, merely to the importunities of Columbus ; he considered him, says the historian, a vain-glorious man, fond of displaying his abilities, and given to fantastic fancies, such as that respecting the island of Cipango †. But in fact, this idea of Columbus being vain, was taken up by the Portuguese writers in after years,

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 10.

† Barros. Asia, decad. 1., l. iii., c. 2.

and as to the island of Cipango, it was far from being considered chimerical by the king ; who, as has been shown by his mission in search of Prester John, was a ready believer in these travellers' tales concerning the east. The reasoning of Columbus must have had its weight on the mind of the monarch, since it is certain that he referred the proposition to a learned junto, charged with all matters relating to maritime discovery.

This junto was composed of two able cosmographers, masters Roderigo and Joseph, and the king's confessor, Diego Ortiz de Cazadilla, Bishop of Ceuta, a man greatly reputed for his learning, a Castilian by birth, and generally called Cazadilla, from the name of his native place. This scientific body treated the project as extravagant and visionary.

Still the king does not appear to have been satisfied. According to his historian Vasconcelez*, he convoked his council, composed of the prelates and persons of the greatest learning in the kingdom, and asked their advice, whether to adopt

* Vasconcelez, *Vida del Rey Don Juan II.*, l. iv.

this new route of discovery, or to pursue that which they had already opened ? The proposition of Columbus was generally condemned by the council, and, in fact, a spirit seemed to be awaking among them hostile to all discovery.

It may not be deemed superfluous to notice briefly the discussion of the council on this great question. Vasconcelez reports a speech of the Bishop of Ceuta, in which he not only objected to the proposed enterprise, as destitute of reason, but even discountenanced any further prosecution of the African discoveries.—They tended,—he said,—to distract the attention, drain the resources, and divide the power of the nation, already too much weakened by recent war and pestilence. While their forces were thus scattered abroad on remote and unprofitable expeditions, they exposed themselves to attack from their active enemy the King of Castile. The greatness of monarchs, he observed, did not arise so much from the extent of their dominions, as from the wisdom and ability with which they governed.—He continued—In the Portuguese nation it would be madness

to launch into enterprises without first considering them in connexion with its means. The king had already sufficient undertakings in hand of certain advantage, without engaging in others of a wild, chimerical nature. If he wished employment for the active valour of the nation, the war in which he was engaged against the Moors of Barbary was sufficient, wherein his triumphs were of solid advantage, tending to cripple and enfeeble those neighbouring foes, who had proved themselves so dangerous when possessed of power.

This cool and cautious speech of the Bishop of Ceuta, directed against those enterprises which were the glory of the Portuguese, touched the national pride of Don Pedro de Meneses, Count of Villa Real, and drew from him a lofty and patriotic reply. It has been said by an historian that this reply was in support of the proposition of Columbus; but that does not clearly appear. He may have treated the proposal with respect, but his eloquence was employed for those enterprises in which the Portuguese were already engaged.

“Portugal,” he observed, “was not in its infancy, nor were its princes so poor as to lack means to engage in discoveries. Even granting that those proposed by Columbus were conjectural, why should they abandon those commenced by their late Prince Henry, on such solid foundations, and prosecuted with such happy prospects? Crowns,” he observed, “enriched themselves by commerce, fortified themselves by alliance, and acquired empires by conquest. The views of a nation could not always be the same; they extended with its opulence and prosperity. Portugal was at peace with all the princes of Europe. It had nothing to fear from engaging in an extensive enterprise. It would be the greatest glory for Portuguese valour to penetrate into the secrets and horrors of the ocean sea, so formidable to the other nations of the world. Thus occupied, it would escape the idleness engendered in a long interval of peace, idleness—that source of vice, that silent file, which, little by little, wore away the strength and valour of a nation. It was an affront,” he added, “to the Portuguese name to menace it

with imaginary perils, when it had proved itself so intrepid in encountering the most certain and tremendous. Great souls were formed for great enterprises. He wondered much, that a prelate, so religious as the Bishop of Ceuta, should oppose this undertaking ; the ultimate object of which was to augment the Catholic faith, and spread it from pole to pole ; reflecting glory on the Portuguese nation, and yielding empire and lasting fame to its princes." He concluded by declaring that, "although a soldier, he dared to prognosticate, with a voice and spirit as if from heaven, to whatever prince should achieve this enterprise, more happy success and durable renown, than had ever been obtained by sovereign the most valorous and fortunate *." Such was the warm and generous speech of the Count of Villa Real, in favour of the African discoveries. It would have been fortunate for Portugal had his eloquence been exerted in favour of Columbus ; for it is said to have been received with acclamations, to have overpowered the reasonings of the cold-

* Vasconcelos, l. iv. La Clede, Hist. Portugal, l. xiii., t. 3.

spirited Cazadilla, and to have inspired the king and council with renewed ardour for the attempt to circumnavigate the extremity of Africa, which they afterwards completed with such brilliant success.

CHAPTER VIII.

DEPARTURE OF COLUMBUS FROM PORTUGAL, AND HIS APPLICATION TO OTHER COURTS.

JOHN II. of Portugal is generally represented as a wise and magnanimous prince, and as one little apt to be ruled by his councillors. In this memorable negociation with Columbus, however, he appears to have been wanting in his usual magnanimity, and to have listened to crafty counsel; opposite at all times to true policy, and in this instance productive of much mortification and regret. Certain amongst his councillors, seeing that the monarch was dissatisfied with their decision, and still retained a lurking inclination for the enterprise, suggested a stratagem by which all its advantages might be secured, without committing the dignity of the crown by entering into formal negociations about a scheme which might prove a mere chimera. It was proposed that Columbus should be kept in suspense, while a vessel should

be secretly despatched in the direction he had pointed out, to ascertain whether there were any foundation for his theory.

This perfidious advice is attributed to Cazadilla, bishop of Ceuta, and agrees with the narrow policy which would have persuaded King John to abandon the splendid track of his African discoveries. The king, in evil hour, departed from his usual justice and generosity, and had the weakness to permit the stratagem. Columbus was required to furnish a detailed plan of his proposed voyage, with the charts or other documents, according to which he intended to shape his course, that they might be examined by the council. He readily complied. A caravel was then despatched, with the ostensible pretext of carrying provisions to the Cape de Verde Islands, but with private instructions to pursue the route designated in the papers of Columbus. Departing from those islands, the caravel stood westward for several days. The weather grew stormy, and the pilots, having no zeal to stimulate them, and seeing nothing but an immeasurable waste of wild trembling waves,

still extending before them, lost all courage to proceed. They put back to the Cape de Verde islands, and thence to Lisbon, excusing their own want of resolution, by ridiculing the project of Columbus as extravagant and irrational*.

This unworthy attempt to defraud him of his enterprise aroused the indignation of Columbus. King John, it is said, would have renewed the negociation, but he resolutely declined. His wife had been for some time dead ; the domestic tie which had bound him to Portugal was broken ; he determined, therefore, to abandon a country where he had been treated with so little faith, and to seek patronage elsewhere.

Towards the end of 1484, he departed secretly from Lisbon, taking with him his son Diego. The reason he assigned for leaving the kingdom thus privately, is, that he feared being prevented by the king ; another reason appears to have arisen from his poverty. While engrossed by those speculations which were to produce such benefit to mankind, his affairs had run to ruin. It would

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 8. Herrera, decad. 1., l. i., c. 7.

seem that he was even in danger of being arrested for debt. A letter lately discovered, which was written to Columbus, some years afterwards, by the King of Portugal, inviting his return, ensures him against any arrest on account of any process, civil or criminal, which might be pending against him*.

An interval now occurs of about a year, during which the movements of Columbus are involved in uncertainty. A modern Spanish historian, of great investigation and accuracy, is of opinion that he departed immediately for Genoa, where he affirms that he certainly was in 1485, when he repeated, in person, a proposition of his enterprise which he had formerly made to the government by letter, but that he met with a contemptuous refusal†.

The republic of Genoa, in fact, was not in a situation favourable to such an undertaking. She was languishing under a long decline, and embarrassed by a foreign war. Caffa, her great deposit

* Navarette Collec., t. ii., dec. 3.

† Muñoz, Hist. Nvo. Mundo, l. ii.

in the Crimea, had recently fallen into the hands of the Turks, and her flag was on the point of being driven from the Archipelago. Her spirit was broken with her fortunes; for with nations, as with individuals, enterprise is the child of prosperity, and is apt to languish in evil days, when there is most need of its exertion. Thus Genoa, it would appear, disheartened by her reverses, shut her ears to a proposition which would have elevated her to tenfold splendour, and might have perpetuated the golden wand of commerce in the grasp of Italy.

From Genoa, it is suggested that Columbus carried his proposal to Venice. No documents exist to support this opinion. An Italian writer, of merit and research, says there is an old tradition floating in Venice to that effect. A distinguished magistrate of that city, he adds, assured him that he had formerly seen mention in the public archives of this offer of Columbus, and of its being declined in consequence of the critical state of national affairs*. The long and invete-

* Bossi, Document, No. XIV.

rate wars, however, which had prevailed between Venice and his native state, render this application rather improbable. Different authors agree, that, about this time, he visited his aged father, made some arrangements for his comfort, and, having performed the duties of a pious son, departed once more to try his fortunes in foreign courts*.

It will be observed, that several of the foregoing circumstances, by which an attempt has been made to account for the interval between the departure of Columbus from Portugal, and the first notice we have of him in Spain, are conjectural. Such, however, is the embarrassment in developing this obscure part of his history, before the splendour of his discovery had shed a light

* It has generally been asserted that about this time Columbus sent his brother Bartholomew to England, with proposals to King Henry VII., where he remained several years. Las Casas, however, intimates from letters and writings of Bartholomew, in his possession, that the latter accompanied Bartholomew Diaz in his voyage from Lisbon in 1486, along the coast of Africa, in the course of which he discovered the Cape of Good Hope, from whence he returned in December, 1487. The application to King Henry was not made until 1488, as would appear by the inscription on a map which Bartholomew presented to that king. Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. i., cap. 7.

about his path. All that can be done is to grope along, from one isolated fact to another. That during this interval he struggled hard with poverty, would appear from the destitute situation in which we first meet with him in Spain ; nor is it one of the least extraordinary circumstances in his eventful life, that he had, in a manner, to beg his way from court to court, to offer to princes the discovery of a world.

B O O K II.

CHAPTER I.

FIRST ARRIVAL OF COLUMBUS IN SPAIN.

IT is interesting to notice the first arrival of Columbus in that country, which was to become the scene of his glory, and which he was to render so powerful and illustrious by his discoveries. In this we meet with one of those striking and instructive contrasts which occur in his eventful history.

The first trace we have of him in Spain, is in the testimony furnished a few years after his death, in the celebrated lawsuit between his son Don Diego and the crown, by Garcia Fernandez, a physician resident in the little sea-port of Palos de Moguer, in Andalusia. About half a league from that town, stood, and stands at the present day, an ancient convent of Franciscan friars,

dedicated to Santa Maria de Rabida. According to the testimony of the physician, a stranger on foot, accompanied by a young boy, stopped one day at the gate of the convent, and asked of the porter a little bread and water for his child. While receiving this humble refreshment, the prior of the convent, Friar Juan Perez de Marchena, happening to pass by, was struck with the appearance of the stranger, and, observing from his air and accent that he was a foreigner, entered into conversation with him, and soon learnt the particulars of his story. That stranger was Columbus, accompanied by his young son Diego. Whence he had come from does not clearly appear*; that he was in des-

* “Lo dicho almirante Colon veniendo a la Rabida, que es un monasterio de frailes en esta villa, el qual demandò a la porteria que le diesen para aquel niñico, que era niño, pan i agua que bebiiese.” The testimony of Garcia Fernandez exists in manuscript among the multifarious writing of the Pleito, or lawsuit, which are preserved at Seville. I have made use of an authenticated extract copied for the late historian Juan Baut. Muñoz. There is a little obscurity in some part of the evidence of Garcia Fernandez. It was given many years after the event. He states Columbus as coming with his infant son from the Castilian court; but he evidently confounds two visits which Columbus made to the convent of La Rabida into one. In making use of his testimony, that confusion has been corrected by comparing it with other well-ascertained facts.

titute circumstances is evident from the mode of his way-faring ; he was on his way to the neighbouring town of Huelra, to seek his brother-in-law, who had married a sister of his deceased wife*.

The prior was a man of extensive information. His attention had been turned, in some measure, to geographical and nautical science, probably from his vicinity to Palos, the inhabitants of which were among the most enterprising navigators of Spain, and made frequent voyages to the recently discovered islands and countries on the African coast. He was greatly interested by the conversation of Columbus, and struck with the grandeur of his views. It was a remarkable occurrence in the monotonous life of the cloistered monk, that a man of such singular character, intent on so extraordinary an enterprise, should apply for bread and water at the gate of his convent. He detained him as his guest, and, diffident of his own judgment, sent for a scientific friend to converse with him : that friend was Garcia Fernandez,

* Probably Pedro Correa, already mentioned, from whom he had received information of signs of land in the west, observed near Puerto Santo.

the physician of Palos, the same who furnishes this interesting testimony. Fernandez was equally struck with the appearance and conversation of the stranger. Several conferences took place at the old convent, and the project of Columbus was treated with a deference in the quiet cloisters of La Rabida, which it had in vain sought amidst the bustle and pretension of court-sages and philosophers. Hints, too, were gathered among the veteran mariners of Palos, which seemed to corroborate his theory. One Pedro de Velasco, an old experienced pilot of the place, affirmed, that, nearly thirty years before, in the course of a voyage, he was carried by stress of weather so far to the north-west, that Cape Clear, in Ireland, lay to the east of him. Here, though there was a strong wind blowing from the west, the sea was perfectly smooth, a remarkable circumstance, which he supposed to be produced by land lying in that direction. It being late in August, however, he was fearful of the approach of winter, and did not venture to proceed on the discovery*.

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 8.

Fray Juan Perez possessed that hearty zeal in friendship, which carries good wishes into good deeds. Being fully persuaded that the proposed enterprise would be of the utmost importance to the country, he offered to give Columbus a favourable introduction at court, and he advised him by all means to repair thither, and make his propositions to the Spanish sovereigns. Juan Perez was on intimate terms with Fernando de Talavera, prior of the monastery of Prado, and confessor to the Queen, a man high in royal confidence, and possessing great weight in public affairs*. To him, he gave Columbus a letter, strongly recommending the adventurer and his enterprise to the patronage of Talavera, and requesting his friendly intercession with the king and queen. As the influence of the church was paramount in the court of Castile, and as Talavera, from his situation as confessor, had the most direct and confidential communication with the queen, every thing was expected from his mediation. In the meantime, Fray Juan

* Salinas, *Cron. Franciscana de Peru*, l. i., c. 14. Melendez, *Tesoros verdaderos de las Indias*, l. i., c. 1.

Perez took charge of the youthful son of Columbus, to maintain and educate him at his convent. The zeal of this worthy man, thus early enkindled, never cooled ; and many years afterwards, in the day of his success, Columbus looks back through the brilliant crowd of courtiers, prelates, and philosophers, who claimed the honour of having patronized his enterprise, and points to this modest friar, as one who had been most effectually its friend. He remained at the convent until the spring of 1476, when the court arrived in the ancient city of Cordova, where the sovereigns intended to assemble their troops, and make preparations for a spring campaign against the Moorish kingdom of Granada. Elated, then, with fresh hopes, and confident of a speedy audience, on the strength of the letter to Fernando de Talavera, Columbus bade farewell to the worthy prior of La Rabida, leaving with him his child, and set out, full of spirits, for the court of Castile.

CHAPTER II.

CHARACTERS OF FERNAND AND ISABELLA.

[1486.]

THE time when Columbus first sought his fortunes in Spain coincided with one of the most brilliant periods of the Spanish monarchy. The union of the kingdoms of Arragon and Castile, by the marriage of Ferdinand and Isabella, had consolidated the Christian power in the Peninsula, and put an end to those internal feuds, which had so long distracted the country, and ensured the domination of the Moslems. The whole force of united Spain was now exerted in the chivalrous enterprise of the Moorish conquest. The Moors, who had once spread over the whole country like an inundation, were now pent up within the mountain boundaries of the kingdom of Granada. The victorious armies of Ferdinand and Isabella were continually advancing, and pressing this fierce people within narrower limits. Under these sovereigns,

the various petty kingdoms of Spain began to feel and act as one nation, and to rise to eminence in arts as well as arms. Ferdinand and Isabella, it has been remarked, lived together not like man and wife, whose estates are common, under the orders of the husband, but like two monarchs strictly allied*. They had separate claims to sovereignty, in virtue of their respective kingdoms ; they had separate councils, and were often distant from each other in different parts of their empire, each exercising the royal authority. Yet they were so happily united by common views, common interests, and a great deference for each other, that this double administration never prevented a unity of purpose and of action. All acts of sovereignty were executed in both their names ; all public writings were subscribed with both their signatures ; their likenesses were stamped together on the public coin ; and the royal seal displayed the united arms of Castile and Arragon.

Ferdinand was of the middle stature, well proportioned, and hardy and active from athletic ex-

* Voltaire, *Essai sur les Mœurs, &c.*

ercise. His carriage was free, erect, and majestic. He had a clear serene forehead, which appeared more lofty from his head being partly bald. His eyebrows were large and parted, and, like his hair, of a bright chestnut; his eyes were clear and animated; his complexion was somewhat ruddy, and scorched by the toils of war; his mouth moderate, well-formed, and gracious in its expression; his teeth white, though small and irregular; his voice sharp; his speech quick and fluent. His genius was clear and comprehensive; his judgment grave and certain. He was simple in dress and diet, equable in his temper, devout in his religion, and so indefatigable in business, that it was said he seemed to repose himself by working. He was a great observer and judge of men, and unparalleled in the science of the cabinet. Such is the picture given of him by the Spanish historians of his time. It has been added, however, that he had more of bigotry than religion; that his ambition was craving rather than magnanimous; that he made war less like a paladin than a prince, less for glory than for mere dominion; and that his

policy was cold, selfish, and artful. He was called the wise and prudent in Spain; in Italy, the pious; in France and England, the ambitious and perfidious*.

While giving his picture, it may not be deemed impertinent to sketch the fortunes of a monarch whose policy had such an effect upon the history of Columbus and the destinies of the New World. Success attended all his measures. Though a younger son, he had ascended the throne of Arragon by inheritance; Castile he obtained by marriage, Granada and Naples by conquest; and he seized upon Navarre as appertaining to any one who could take possession of it, when Pope Julius II. excommunicated its sovereigns, Juan and Catalina, and gave their throne to the first occupant†. He sent his forces into Africa, and subjugated, or reduced to vassalage, Tunis, and Tripoli, and Algiers, and most of the Barbary powers. A new world was also given to him, without cost, by the discoveries of Columbus, for

* Voltaire, *Essai sur les Mœurs*, ch. xiv.

† Pedro Salazar di Mendoza, *Monarq. de Esp.*, lib. iii., cap. 5. (Madrid, 1770, tom. i., p. 402.)—Gonzalo de Illescas, *Hist. Pontif.*, l. vi., c. 23., § 3.

the expense of the enterprise was borne exclusively by his consort Isabella. He had three objects at heart from the commencement of his reign, which he pursued with bigoted and persecuting zeal, the conquest of the Moors, the expulsion of the Jews, and the establishment of the Inquisition in his dominions. He accomplished them all, and was rewarded by Pope Innocent VIII. with the appellation of Most Catholic Majesty—a title which his successors have tenaciously retained.

Contemporary writers have been enthusiastic in their descriptions of Isabella, but time has sanctioned their eulogies. She is one of the purest and most beautiful characters in the pages of history. She was well formed, of the middle size, with great dignity and gracefulness of deportment, and a mingled gravity and sweetness of demeanour. Her complexion was fair; her hair auburn, inclining to red; her eyes were of a clear blue, with a benign expression, and there was a singular modesty in her countenance, gracing, as it did, a wonderful firmness of purpose, and earnestness of spirit. Though strongly attached to her husband,

and studious of his fame, yet she always maintained her distinct rights as an allied prince. She exceeded him in beauty, in personal dignity, in acuteness of genius, and in grandeur of soul *. Combining the active and resolute qualities of man with the softer charities of woman, she mingled in the warlike councils of her husband, engaged personally in his enterprises †, and in some instances surpassed him in the firmness and intrepidity of her measures ; while, being inspired with a truer idea of glory, she infused a more lofty and generous temper into his subtle and calculating policy. It is in the civil history of their reign, however, that the character of Isabella shines most illustrious. Her fostering and maternal care was continually directed to reform the laws, and heal the ills engendered by a long course of internal wars. She loved her people, and, while diligently seeking their good, she mitigated, as much as possible, the harsh measures of her

* Garibay, Hist. de España, t. ii., l. xviii., c. 1.

† Several suits of armour *cap-a-pié*, worn by Isabella, and still preserved in the royal arsenal at Madrid, show that she was exposed to personal danger in her campaigns.

husband, directed to the same end, but inflamed by a mistaken zeal. Thus, though almost bigoted in her piety, and perhaps too much under the influence of ghostly advisers, still she was hostile to every measure calculated to advance religion at the expense of humanity. She strenuously opposed the expulsion of the Jews, and the establishment of the Inquisition, though, unfortunately for Spain, her repugnance was slowly vanquished by her confessors. She was always an advocate for clemency to the Moors, although she was the soul of the war against Granada. She considered that war essential to protect the Christian faith, and to relieve her subjects from fierce and formidable enemies. While all her public thoughts and acts were princely and august, her private habits were simple, frugal, and unostentatious. In the intervals of state-business, she assembled round her the ablest men in literature and science, and directed herself by their counsels, in promoting letters and arts. Through her patronage, Salamanca rose to that height which it assumed among the learned institutions of the age. She promoted

the distribution of honours and rewards for the promulgation of knowledge ; she fostered the art of printing recently invented, and encouraged the establishment of presses in every part of the kingdom ; books were admitted free of all duty, and more, we are told, were printed in Spain, at that early period of the art, than in the present literary age *.

It is wonderful how much the destinies of countries depend at times upon the virtues of individuals, and how it is given to great spirits, by combining, exciting, and directing the latent powers of a nation, to stamp it, as it were, with their own greatness. Such beings realise the idea of guardian angels, appointed by heaven to watch over the destinies of empires. Such had been Prince Henry for the kingdom of Portugal ; and such was now for Spain the illustrious Isabella.

* *Elogio de la Reina Catholica*, por Diego Clemencin. Madrid, 1821.

CHAPTER III.

PROPOSITIONS OF COLUMBUS TO THE COURT
OF CASTILE.

COLUMBUS arrived at Cordova early in 1486. He was disappointed, however, in his hopes of immediate patronage ; he found it impossible to obtain even a hearing. Fernando de Talavera, prior of Prado, instead of being secured to his interests by the recommendation of Juan Perez de Marnchena, looked upon his plan as extravagant and impossible *. Indeed, the slender interest on which he founded his hopes of success at court, and the humble garb in which his poverty obliged him to appear, formed a preposterous contrast in the eyes of the courtiers with the magnificence of his speculations. “ Because he was a stranger,” says Oviedo, “ and went but in simple apparel, nor otherwise credited than by the letter of a gray

* Salazar, Chron. del Gran Cardenal, l. i., c. 62.

friar, they believed him not, neither gave ear to his words, whereby he was greatly tormented in his imagination*.” The time consumed by Columbus in lingering attendance on the Spanish court has occasioned much animadversion. It is but candid, however, to take into consideration the situation of the sovereigns at the time, which was certainly most unpropitious to his suit. The war with Granada was then in full activity, and the king and queen engaged in most of the campaigns, in person. When Columbus arrived at Cordova, the court was like a military camp. The rival Moorish kings of Granada, Muley Boabdil, the uncle, called also El Zagal, and Mahomet Boabdil the nephew, generally termed El Chiquito, had just formed a coalition, and their league called for prompt and vigorous measures.

Early in the spring, the king marched off to lay siege to the Moorish city of Loxa ; and though the queen remained at Cordova, she was continually employed in forwarding troops and supplies to the army, and, at the same time, attending to

* Oviedo, l. ii., c. 5. English translation.

the multiplied exigencies of civil government. On the 12th of June, she repaired to the camp, then engaged in the siege of Moclin, and both sovereigns remained for some time in the Vega of Granada, prosecuting the war with unremitting vigour. They had barely returned to Cordova to celebrate their victories by public rejoicings, when they were obliged to set out for Gallicia, to suppress a rebellion of the Count of Lemos. From thence they repaired to Salamanca for the winter*.

This brief picture of the occupation and the bustling life of the Spanish sovereigns during the first year after the arrival of Columbus, may give an idea of their reign throughout the term of his negociation, which precisely coincided with their war with the Moors. The court was continually shifting from place to place, according to the exigency of the moment. The sovereigns were either on journeys or in the field, and, when they had an interval of repose from the rugged toils of war, they had a thousand claims on their time and attention, from the modifications and reforms

* Pulgar, Zurita, Garibay, &c.

which they were enforcing throughout their dominions.

Amidst such pressing concerns of domestic and immediate importance, and so exhausting to the treasury, it is not to be wondered at, that the monarchs should find little time to attend to a scheme of foreign discovery, which required much consideration, called for great expense, and was generally esteemed the wild dream of an enthusiast. It is a question even, whether, for some time, his application reached their ears. Fernando de Talavera, who was to have been his organ of communication, was unfriendly to his cause, and was himself taken up with military concerns, and absent with the court in its campaigns, being one of the clerical advisers, who surrounded the queen in this, as it was termed, holy war.

During the summer and autumn of 1486, the period of the campaign and transactions just alluded to, Columbus remained at Cordova. He continued to support himself, it is believed, by designing maps and charts *, and trusted to time

* Cura de los Palacios, c. 118.

and exertion to make him converts and friends of influence. He had to contend against the ridicule of the light and the supercilious,—one of the greatest obstacles which modest merit can encounter in a court. He had a sanguine temperament, however, and a fund of enthusiasm, which bore him up against every trial. There was a dignity, likewise, in his manners, and an earnest sincerity in his conversation, which gradually gained him friends. One of the most effectual, was Alonzo de Quintanilla, comptroller of the finances of Castile, who, it is said, received him into his house, and became a warm advocate of his theory*. He became acquainted with Antonio Geraldini, the Pope's nuncio, and with his brother, Alexander Geraldini, preceptor to the younger children of Ferdinand and Isabella, both of whom entered warmly into his views †. By the aid of these friends, he was introduced to the celebrated Pedro Gonzalez de Mendoza, archbishop of Toledo, and grand cardinal of Spain ‡.

* Salazar, Chron. G. Cardenal, l. i., c. 62.

† Spotorno, page xlvi. Eng. translation.

‡ Oviedo, l. ii., c. 4. Salazar, l. i., c. 62.

This was the most important personage about court. The king and queen had him always at their side, in peace and war. He accompanied them in their campaigns, and they never took any measure of consequence without consulting him. He was facetiously called by Peter Martyr “the third king of Spain.” He was a man of a clear understanding, eloquent, judicious, and of a great quickness and capacity in business. Simple, yet curiously nice in his apparel, lofty and venerable, yet gracious and gentle in his deportment. Though an elegant scholar, the grand cardinal, like many learned men of his day, was but little skilled in cosmography, and was tenacious in his religious scruples. When the theory of Columbus was first mentioned to him, it struck him as involving heterodox opinions, incompatible with the form of the earth as described in the sacred Scriptures. Further explanations had their force with a man of his quick apprehension and sound sense. He perceived, that, at any rate, there could be nothing irreligious in attempting to extend the bounds of human knowledge, and to ascertain the

works of creation : his scruples once removed, he gave Columbus a courteous and attentive hearing.

The latter, knowing the importance of his auditor, exerted himself to produce conviction. The clear-headed cardinal listened with profound attention. He saw the grandeur of the conception, and felt the force of the arguments. He was pleased likewise with the noble and earnest manner of Columbus, and became at once a firm and serviceable friend *. The representations of the grand cardinal procured Columbus an audience from the sovereigns. He appeared before them with modesty, yet self-possession : for he felt himself, as he afterwards declared in his letters, an instrument in the hand of Heaven to accomplish its grand designs †.

Ferdinand was too keen a judge of men not to appreciate the character of Columbus. He perceived that, however soaring might be his imagination, and magnificent his speculations, the scheme had scientific and practical foundation.

* Oviedo, l. ii., c. 4. Salazar, l. i., c. 62.

† Letter to the Sovereigns in 1501.

His ambition was excited by the possibility of discoveries far more important than those which had shed such glory upon Portugal. Still, as usual, he was cool and wary, and determined to take the opinion of the most learned men in the kingdom, and to be guided by their decision. He referred the matter, therefore, to Ferdinando de Talavera, the prior of Prado, authorising him to assemble the most learned astronomers and cosmographers, to hold a conference with Columbus, informing themselves of the grounds on which he founded his proposition ; after which they were to consult together, and make their report *.

‡ Hist. del Almirante, c. xi.

CHAPTER IV.

COLUMBUS BEFORE THE COUNCIL AT
SALAMANCA.

THE interesting conference relative to the proposition of Columbus took place in Salamanca, the great seat of learning in Spain. It was held in the Dominican convent of St. Stephen, in which Columbus was lodged and entertained with great hospitality, during the course of the examination*.

Religion and science were at that time, and more especially in that country, closely associated. The treasures of learning were immured in monasteries, and the professors chairs were exclusively filled from the cloister. The domination of the clergy extended over the state as well as the church, and posts of honour and influence at court, with the exception of hereditary nobles, were almost entirely confided to ecclesiastics. It

* Hist. de Chiapa, por Remesel, l. ii., c. 27.

was even common to find cardinals and bishops in helm and corslet at the head of armies ; for the crosier had been occasionally thrown by for the lance, during the holy war against the Moors. The era was distinguished for the revival of learning, but still more for the prevalence of religious zeal, and Spain surpassed all other countries of Christendom in the fervor of her devotion. The Inquisition had just been established in that kingdom, and every opinion that savoured of heresy made its owner obnoxious to odium and persecution.

Such was the period, when a council of clerical sages was convened in the collegiate convent of St. Stephen, to investigate the new theory of Columbus. It was composed of professors of astronomy, geography, mathematics, and other branches of science, together with various dignitaries of the church, and learned friars. Before this erudite assembly, Columbus presented himself, to propound and defend his conclusions. He had been scoffed at as visionary, by the vulgar and ignorant, but he was convinced that he only

required a body of enlightened men to listen dispassionately to his reasonings, to ensure triumphant conviction.

The greater part of this learned junto, it is very probable, came prepossessed against him, as men in place and dignity are apt to be against poor applicants. There is always a proneness to consider a man under examination as a kind of delinquent, or impostor, whose faults and errors are to be detected and exposed. Columbus, too, appeared in a most unfavourable light before a scholastic body ; an obscure navigator, member of no learned institution, destitute of all the trappings and circumstances which sometimes give oracular authority to dulness, and depending upon the mere force of natural genius. Some of the junto entertained the popular notion that he was an adventurer, or at best a visionary, and others had that morbid impatience of any innovation upon established doctrine, which is apt to grow upon dull and pedantic men in cloistered life. What a striking spectacle must the hall of the old convent have presented at this memorable

conference ! A simple mariner, standing forth in the midst of an imposing array of professors, friars, and dignitaries of the church ; maintaining his theory with natural eloquence, and, as it were, pleading the cause of the New World. We are told, that when he began to state the grounds of his belief, the friars of St. Stephen alone paid attention to him* ; that convent being more learned in the sciences than the rest of the university. The others appeared to have entrenched themselves behind one dogged position ; that, after so many profound philosophers and cosmographers had been studying the form of the world, and so many able navigators had been sailing about it for several thousand years, it was a great presumption in an ordinary man, to suppose that there remained such a vast discovery for him to make. Several of the objections opposed by this learned body have been handed down to us, and have provoked many a sneer at the expense of the university of Salamanca. But these are proofs, not so much of the peculiar deficiency of that in-

* Remesel, Hist. de Chiapa, l. ii., c. 7.

stitution, as of the imperfect state of science at the time, and of the manner in which knowledge, though rapidly extending, was still impeded in its progress by monastic bigotry. All subjects were still contemplated through the obscure medium of those ages when the lights of antiquity were trampled out, and faith was left to fill the place of inquiry. Bewildered in a maze of religious controversy, mankind had retraced their steps and receded from the boundary line of ancient knowledge. Thus, at the very threshold of the discussion, instead of geographical objections, Columbus was assailed with citations from the Bible and the Testament, the book of Genesis, the psalms of David, the Prophets, the epistles, and the gospels. To these were added, the expositions of various Saints and reverend commentators, St. Chrysostome and St. Augustine, St. Jerome and St. Gregory, St. Basil and St. Ambrose, and Lactantius Firmianus, a redoubted champion of the faith. Doctrinal points were mixed up with philosophical discussions, and a mathematical demonstration

was allowed no truth, if it appeared to clash with a text of scripture, or a commentary of one of the fathers. Thus the possibility of antipodes in the southern hemisphere, an opinion so generally maintained by the wisest of the ancients, as to be pronounced by Pliny the great contest between the learned and the ignorant, became a stumbling block with some of the sages of Salamanca. Several of them stoutly contradicted this basis of the theory of Columbus, supporting themselves by quotations from Lactantius and St. Augustine, who were considered in those days as almost evangelical authority. But, though these writers were men of consummate erudition, and two of the greatest luminaries of what has been called the golden age of ecclesiastical learning, yet their writings were calculated to perpetuate darkness in respect to the sciences.

The passage cited from Lactantius to confute Columbus is in a strain of gross ridicule, unworthy of so grave a theologian. “Is there any one so foolish,” he asks, “as to believe that there are

antipodes with their feet opposite to ours ; people who walk with their heels upward and their heads hanging down ? that there is a part of the world in which all things are topsy-turvy ; where the trees grow with their branches downward, and where it rains, hails, and snows upward ? The idea of the roundness of the earth," he adds, " was the cause of inventing this fable of the antipodes with their heels in the air ; for these philosophers, having once erred, go on in their absurdities, defending one with another." More grave objections were advanced on the authority of St. Augustine. He pronounces the doctrine of antipodes incompatible with the historical foundations of our faith ; since, to assert that there were inhabited lands on the opposite side of the globe, would be to maintain that there were nations not descended from Adam, it being impossible for them to have passed the intervening ocean. This would be, therefore, to discredit the bible, which expressly declares, that all men are descended from one common parent.

Such were the unlooked for prejudices which Columbus had to encounter at the very outset of his conference, and which certainly relish more of the convent than the university. To his simplest proposition, the spherical form of the earth, were opposed figurative texts of scripture. They observed, that in the Psalms, the heavens are said to be extended like a hide* ; that is, according to commentators, the curtain, or covering of a tent, which, among the ancient pastoral nations, was formed of the hides of animals ; and that St. Paul, in his epistle to the Hebrews, compares the heavens to a tabernacle, or tent, extended over the earth, which they thence inferred must be flat. Columbus, who was a devoutly religious man, found that he was in danger of being convicted, not merely of error, but of heterodoxy. Others, more versed in science, admitted the globular form of the earth, and the possibility of an opposite and inhabitable hemisphere ; but they brought up the chimera of the ancients, and

* Extendens cœlum sicut pellem. Psal. ciii. In the English translation it is Psalm civ., v. 3.

maintained that it would be impossible to arrive there, in consequence of the insupportable heat of the torrid zone. Even granting this could be passed, they observed, that the circumference of the earth must be so great as to require at least three years to the voyage, and those who should undertake it must perish of hunger and thirst, from the impossibility of carrying provisions for so long a period. He was told, on the authority of Epicurus*, that, admitting the earth to be spherical, it was only inhabitable in the northern hemisphere, and in that section only was canopied by the heavens ; that the opposite half was a chaos, a gulph, or a mere waste of water. Not the least absurd objection advanced, was, that should a ship even succeed in reaching, in this way, the extremity of India, she could never get back again ; for the rotundity of the globe would present a kind of mountain, up which it would be impossible for her to sail with the most favourable wind †.

* Acosta, l. i., cap. 1.

† Hist. del Almirante, cap. 2.

Such are specimens of the errors and prejudices, the mingled ignorance and erudition, and the pedantic bigotry, with which Columbus had to contend throughout the examination of his theory. Can we wonder at the difficulties and delays which he experienced at courts, when such vague and crude notions were entertained by the learned men of a university? We must not suppose, however, because the objections here cited are all which remain on record, that they are all which were advanced; these only have been perpetuated on account of their superior absurdity. They were probably advanced by but few, and those persons immersed in theological studies, in cloistered retirement, where the erroneous opinions derived from books, had little opportunity of being corrected by the experience of the day. There were no doubt objections advanced more cogent in their nature, and more worthy of that distinguished university. It is but justice to add, also, that the replies of Columbus had great weight with many of his learned examiners. In answer to the scriptural objections, he submitted,

that the inspired writers were not speaking technically as cosmographers, but figuratively, in language addressed to all comprehensions. The commentaries of the fathers he treated with deference as pious homilies, but not as philosophical propositions, which it was necessary either to admit or refute. The objections drawn from ancient philosophers, he met boldly and ably upon equal terms ; for he was deeply studied on all points of cosmography. He showed that the most illustrious of these sages believed both hemispheres to be inhabitable, though they imagined that the torrid zone precluded communication ; and he obviated conclusively that difficulty ; for he had voyaged to St. George la Mina, in Guinea, almost under the equinoctial line, and had found that region not merely traversable, but abounding in population, in fruits and pasturage. When Columbus took his stand before this learned body, he had appeared the plain and simple navigator ; somewhat daunted, perhaps, by the greatness of his task, and the august nature of his auditory. But he had a degree of reli-

gious feeling which gave him a confidence in the execution of what he conceived his great errand, and he was of an ardent temperament that became heated in action by its own generous fires. Las Casas, and others of his contemporaries, have spoken of his commanding person, his elevated demeanour, his air of authority, his kindling eye, and the persuasive intonations of his voice. How must they have given majesty and force to his words, as, casting aside his maps and charts, and discarding, for a time, his practical and scientific lore, his visionary spirit took fire at the doctrinal objections of his opponents, and he met them upon their own ground, pouring forth those magnificent texts of scripture, and those mysterious predictions of the prophets, which, in his enthusiastic moments, he considered as types and annunciations of the sublime discovery which he proposed !

Among the number who were convinced by the reasoning, and warmed by the eloquence, of Columbus, was Diego de Deza, a worthy and learned friar of the order of St. Dominic, at that

time professor of theology in the convent of St. Stephen, but who became afterwards archbishop of Seville, the second ecclesiastical dignity of Spain. This able and erudite divine was a man whose mind was above the narrow bigotry of bookish lore; one who could appreciate the value of wisdom, even when uttered by unlearned lips. He was not a mere passive auditor, he took a generous interest in the cause, and by seconding Columbus with all his powers, calmed the blind zeal of his more bigoted brethren, so as to obtain for him a dispassionate, if not an unprejudiced, hearing. By their united efforts, it is said, they brought over the most learned men of the schools*. One great difficulty was to reconcile the plan of Columbus with the cosmography of Ptolemy, to which all scholars yielded implicit faith. How would the most enlightened of those sages have been astonished, had any one apprized them that the man, Copernicus, was then in existence, whose solar system should reverse the grand

* Remesel, *Hist. de Chiapa*, l. ii., c. 7.

theory of Ptolemy, which stationed the earth in the centre of the universe !

Notwithstanding every exertion, however, there was a preponderating mass of inert bigotry and of learned pride in the erudite body, which refused to yield to the demonstrations of an obscure foreigner, without fortune, or connexions, or any academic honours. “ It was requisite,” says Las Casas, “ before Columbus could make his solutions and reasonings understood, that he should remove from his auditors those erroneous principles on which their objections were founded ; a task always more difficult than that of teaching the doctrine.” Occasional conferences took place, but without producing any decision. The ignorant, or what is worse, the prejudiced, remained obstinate in their opposition, with the dogged perseverance of dull men ; the more liberal and intelligent felt little interest in discussions wearisome in themselves, and foreign to their ordinary pursuits ; even those who listened with approbation to the plan, regarded it only as a delightful

vision, full of probability and promise, but one which never could be realized. Fernando de Talavera, to whom the matter was especially intrusted, had too little esteem for it, and was too much occupied with the stir and bustle of public concerns, to press it to a conclusion ; and thus the inquiry experienced continual procrastination and neglect.

CHAPTER V.

FURTHER APPLICATIONS AT THE COURT OF
CASTILE. COLUMBUS FOLLOWS THE
COURT IN ITS CAMPAIGNS.

[1487.]

THE consultations of the board at Salamanca were interrupted by the departure of the court to Cordova early in the spring of 1487 ; called away by the concerns of the war, and the memorable campaign against Malaga. Fernando de Talavera, now bishop of Avila, accompanied the queen as her confessor. For a long time Columbus was kept in suspense, following the movements of the court. He was encouraged at times by the prospect of his proposition being taken into immediate consideration, conferences being appointed for the purpose ; but the tempest of warlike affairs which hurried the court from place to place, and gave it all the bustle and confusion of a camp, continually swept away all questions of less immediate importance. It has generally

been supposed, that the several years which Columbus wasted in irksome solicitation, were spent in the drowsy and monotonous attendance of ante-chambers ; but on the contrary, they were often passed amidst scenes of peril and adventure, and in following up his suit, he was led into some of the most striking situations of this wild, rugged, and mountainous war. Whenever the court had an interval of leisure, there seems to have been a disposition to take up his affair ; but the hurry and tempest returned, and the question was again swept away.

During this time he experienced the scoffs and indignities of which he afterwards complained ; being ridiculed by the light and ignorant as a mere dreamer, and stigmatized by the illiberal as an adventurer. The very children, it is said, pointed to their foreheads as he passed, being taught to regard him as a kind of madman. During this long application, he defrayed his expenses, in part, by the exertion of his talents in making maps. The worthy friar, Diego de Deza, occasionally assisted him with his purse, as well as his good

offices with the sovereigns. He was part of the time a guest of Alonzo de Quintanilla, and for a considerable period entertained at the expense of the duke of Medina Celi, a nobleman of great possessions, who was much engaged in maritime enterprises.

It is due to the sovereigns to say, that while Columbus was thus kept in suspense, he was attached to the royal suite, and sums were issued to defray his expenses, and lodgings provided for him, whenever summoned to follow the movements of the court, and attend the consultations that were at various times appointed. Memorandums of several of these sums still exist in the book of accounts of Francisco Ponzalez, of Seville, one of the royal treasurers, which has lately been found in the archives of Simancas. From these minutes we are enabled, in some degree, to follow the movements of Columbus during his attendance upon this rambling and warlike court.

One of these memorandums was for money to enable him to come to the court then held in the camp before Malaga, during the memorable siege

of 1487, when that city was so obstinately and fiercely defended by the Moors. In the course of this siege, his application to the sovereigns was nearly brought to a violent close ; a fanatic Moor having attempted to assassinate Ferdinand and Isabella. Mistaking the royal tent, he attacked Don Alvaro de Portugal, and Doña Beatrix de Bobadilla, Marchioness of Moya, instead of the king and queen. After wounding Don Alvaro dangerously, he was foiled in a blow aimed at the marchioness, and immediately cut to pieces by the attendants*. The lady here mentioned, was a person of extraordinary merit and force of character. She eventually took a great interest in the suit of Columbus, and had much influence in recommending it to the queen, with whom she was a particular favourite†.

The campaign ended with the capture of Málaga. There appears to have been no time during its stormy siege to attend to the question of Columbus, though Fernando de Talavera, the bishop

* Pulgar Cronica, c. 87. P. Martyr.

† Retrato del Buen Vassallo, l. ii., c. 16.

of Avila, was present, as appears by his entering the captured city in solemn and religious triumph*. Malaga surrendered on the 18th of August, 1487, and the court had scarcely time to return to Cordova, when it was driven away by pestilence.

The sovereigns passed the winter in Saragoza, occupied in various public affairs of moment; they entered the Moorish territories by way of Murcia, in the ensuing spring, and after a short campaign retired to Valladolid for the following winter. Whether Columbus accompanied the court during these migrations, does not appear, although an order for three thousand maravedis, dated June, 1488, makes it probable. But what quiet hearing could be expected from a court surrounded by the din of arms and continually on the march?

That, notwithstanding these delays, he was still encouraged in his expectations, during this interval, is highly probable. In the course of the spring he received a letter from John II., king of Portugal, dated 20th March, 1488, inviting him to return to his court, and assuring him of pro-

* Pulgar, *Cronica*,

tection from any suits of either a civil or criminal nature that might be pending against him. This letter, from its tenor, appears to be a reply to one in which Columbus had commenced negotiations to return. He did not think proper, however, to comply with the invitation of the monarch.

In February, 1489, Ferdinand and Isabella repaired from Valladolid to Medina del Campo, where they received an embassy from Henry VII. of England, with whom they formed an alliance. Whether at this time Columbus had any reply to his application to the English court, does not appear. That he did, at some time during his negotiation in Spain, receive a favourable letter from Henry VII., is expressly stated by himself, in one subsequently written by him to Ferdinand and Isabella*.

The Spanish sovereigns returned to Cordova in May, and Columbus appears then to have been brought to mind, and steps taken to have the long-adjourned investigation resumed. Diego Ortiz de Zuñiga, in his Annals of Seville, says

* Hist. del Almirante, i., cap. 12.

that the sovereigns wrote to that city, directing lodgings and accommodations to be furnished to Christopher Columbus, who was coming there to the court on a conference of importance. The city fulfilled the command, but the conference was postponed, being interrupted by the campaign, "in which," adds the author, "the same Columbus was found fighting, giving proofs of the distinguished valour which accompanied his wisdom, and his lofty desires *."

A royal order is also extant, perhaps the letter here alluded to, dated Cordova, May 12, in the same year. It is addressed to the magistrates of all cities and towns, ordering that lodgings should be furnished gratis to Christopher Columbus and his attendants, being employed in matters connected with the royal service †.

The campaign, in which the historian of Seville ascribes to Columbus so honourable a part, was one of the most glorious of that war. Queen Isabella attended with her court, including, as

* Diego Ortiz de Zuñiga, Ann. de Sevilla, l. xii., anno 1489, p. 404.

† Navarrete, t. ii., doc. No. 4.

usual, a stately train of prelates and friars, among whom is particularly mentioned the procrastinating arbiter of the pretensions of Columbus, Fernando de Talavera. Much of the success of the campaign is ascribed to the presence and counsel of Isabella. The city of Baza, which had resisted valiantly for upwards of six months, surrendered soon after her arrival ; and on the 22d of December, Columbus beheld Muley Boabdil, the elder of the two rival Kings of Grenada, surrender in person all his remaining possessions, and his right to the crown, to the Spanish sovereigns.

During this siege, a circumstance took place, which appears to have made a deep impression on the devout and enthusiastic spirit of Columbus. Two reverend friars arrived at the Spanish camp, employed in the holy sepulchre at Jerusalem. They brought a message from the Grand Soldan of Egypt, threatening to put to death all the Christians in his dominions, and to destroy the sepulchre, if the sovereigns did not desist from the war against Grenada. The menace had no

effect in altering the purpose of the sovereigns ; but Isabella granted a yearly and perpetual sum of one thousand ducats* in gold for the support of the monks who had charge of the sepulchre, and sent a veil, embroidered with her own hands, to be hung up at its shrine†.

It was probably from conversation with these friars, and from the pious indignation excited by the threat of the Soldan, that Columbus conceived an enthusiastic idea, which he more or less entertained until the day of his death. He determined to devote the profits arising from his contemplated discovery, to a holy enterprise to rescue the holy sepulchre from the power of the infidels.

The bustle and turmoil of this campaign prevented the conference at Seville ; nor did the concerns of Columbus fare better during the subsequent rejoicings. Ferdinand and Isabella entered Seville in February, 1490, with great pomp and triumph. There were then prepara-

* Or 1423 dollars, equivalent to 4269 dollars in our time.

† Garibay. Compend. Hist. l. xviii, c. 36.

tions made for the marriage of their eldest daughter, the Princess Isabella, with the Prince Don Alonzo, heir-apparent of Portugal. The nuptials were celebrated in the month of April, with extraordinary splendour. Throughout the whole winter and spring, the court was in a continual tumult of parade and pleasure ; feasts, tournaments, and torch-light processions. What chance had Columbus of being heard in these alternate uproars of war and festivity ?

It was not until the winter of 1491, that Columbus could obtain the long-delayed hearing of his application. The sovereigns were preparing to depart on their final campaign in the Vega of Granada, with a determination never to raise their camp from before that city, until their victorious banners should float upon its towers.

Columbus saw that if once the court got into movement, there would be an end to all hopes of an attention to his affairs. He pressed, therefore, for a decisive reply. It is probable that the conference now took place, which the historian of Seville mentions as having been post-

poned ; and that the council of scientific men, to whom the project had been referred, was again convened.

It is certain that at this time Fernando de Talavera, being called upon by the sovereigns, gave the report of this learned body. He informed their majesties, that it was the general opinion of the Junto, that the scheme proposed was vain and impossible ; and that it did not become such great princes to engage in an enterprise of the kind on such weak grounds as had been advanced*.

Although such was the general report of the committee, Columbus had made an impression upon several of those learned men, which operated strongly in his favour. He had an active friend in Fray Diego Deza, tutor to Prince Juan, who, from his situation and clerical character, had access to the royal ear. The names of several men of rank and merit are also mentioned, who were friendly to his suit. In fact, the grave and honourable demeanour of

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 2.

Columbus, his clear knowledge of every thing relative to his profession, the loftiness and generosity of his views, and his energetic manner of enforcing them, commanded respect wherever he could succeed in fixing attention. A degree of consideration had, therefore, gradually grown up at court for his enterprise ; and, notwithstanding the unfavourable report of the learned Junto of Salamanca, the sovereigns seemed unwilling to close the door upon a project which might be so important in its advantages. Fernando de Talavera was commanded to inform Columbus, who was then at Cordova, that the great cares and expenses of the war rendered it impossible for them to engage in any new enterprises ; but that, when the war was concluded, they would have time and inclination to treat with him about what he offered *.

This was but a starved reply to receive after so many years of weary attendance, of anxious expectation, and deferred hopes. Whatever graciousness, too, there might have been in the

* Hist. del Almirante, ubi sup.

message as dictated by the monarchs, was, probably lost in the chilling medium through which it passed. At any rate, Columbus was unwilling to receive the reply at the hands of a person who had always showed himself unfriendly ; he repaired, therefore, to the court at Seville, to learn his fate from the lips of the monarchs. Their reply was virtually the same, declining to engage in the enterprise for the present, but holding out hopes of patronage when released from the cares and expenses of the war. Columbus looked upon this as a mere evasive mode of getting rid of his importunity ; he believed the sovereigns prepossessed by the objections of the ignorant and the bigoted ; and giving up all hopes of countenance from the throne, turned his back upon Seville, filled with disappointment and indignation.

CHAPTER VI.

APPLICATION TO THE DUKE OF MEDINA CELI. RETURN TO THE CONVENT OF LA RABIDA.

[1491.]

THOUGH Columbus had now relinquished all expectations of patronage from the Castilian sovereigns, he was unwilling to break off all connexion with Spain. A tie of a tender nature still bound him to the country. During his first visit to Cordova, he had conceived a passion for a lady of that city, named Beatrix Enriquez. This attachment has been given as an additional cause of his lingering so long in Spain, and bearing with the delays he experienced. Like most of the particulars of this part of his life, his connexion with this lady is wrapped in obscurity. It does not appear to have been sanctioned by marriage. The lady is said to have been of noble family *. She was the mother of his second son,

* Zuniga, Annales Ecles. de Seville, lib. xiv., p. 496.

Fernando, who became his historian, and whom he always treated on terms of perfect equality with his legitimate son, Diego.

Unwilling to abandon Spain, though despairing of success at court, Columbus now endeavoured to engage some rich and powerful individual in his enterprise. There were several of the Spanish nobles who had vast possessions, and resembled petty sovereigns in their domains. Among these were the Dukes of Medina Sidonia and Medina Celi. Both had estates like principalities, lying along the sea-shore, with ports and shipping at their command. These noblemen served the crown more as allied princes than as vassals, bringing armies of their retainers into the field, led on by their own captains, or by themselves in person. They assisted with their armadas, and they contributed with their treasures to the successes of the war, but maintained a jealous right over the disposition of their forces. During the siege of Malaga, the Duke of Medina Sidonia volunteered, at one time, a large force of the cavaliers of his household, sending twenty

thousand doblas of gold *, and one hundred vessels, some armed, and others laden with provisions, from his rich domains. The domestic establishments of these nobles were like the establishments of petty sovereigns; whole armies of retainers thronged their various estates, and their houses were filled with persons of merit, and with young cavaliers of family, reared under their auspices in the exercise of arts and arms.

To the Duke of Medina Sidonia, Columbus first applied. They had many interviews and conversations, but could never come to a conclusion †. The duke was tempted, for a time, by the magnificent anticipations held out; but the very splendour of these anticipations threw a colouring of exaggeration over the enterprise, and Gomera assures us that he finally rejected it as the dream of an Italian visionary ‡.

Columbus next turned to the Duke of Medina Celi, and, for a time, with great prospect of

* Or 35,514 dollars, and equivalent to the present value of 106,542 dollars.

† Histor. del Almirante, c. 12. Herrera, Hist. Ind., decad. i., l. i., c. 8.

‡ Gomera, Hist. Ind., c. 15.

success ; they had various negotiations, and, at one time, the duke was actually on the point of despatching him on the contemplated voyage, with three or four caravels, which he had ready in his port. Fearing, however, that such an expedition would be strongly discountenanced by the crown, he suddenly abandoned it, observing that the object was too great to be grasped by a subject, and was fit only for a sovereign power*. He advised Columbus to apply once more to the Spanish monarchs, and offered to use his influence with the queen.

Columbus saw time and life thus wasting away in tantalizing hopes and bitter disappointments. He felt averse to the idea of again returning to follow the court in all its baffling movements. He had received a letter of encouragement from the king of France†, and determined to lose no time in repairing to Paris. With this intention he repaired to the convent of La Rabida, to seek his eldest son Diego, who still remained

* Letter of the Duke of Medina Celi to the Grand Cardinal. See NAVARETTE, t. ii., doc. 14.

† Hist. del Almirante, cap. 12.

under the care of his zealous friend Friar Juan Perez, proposing to leave him, with his other son, at Cordova.

When the worthy friar beheld Columbus once more arrive at the gate of his convent, after nearly seven years' solicitation at the court, and saw, by the humility of his garb, the poverty and disappointment he had experienced, he was greatly moved ; but when he found that the voyager was on the point of abandoning Spain, and that so important an enterprise was about to be lost for ever to the country, his ardent spirit was powerfully excited. He summoned his friend, the learned physician, Garcia Fernandez, and they had further consultations on the scheme of Columbus. He called in, also, the counsel of Martin Alonzo Pinzon, the head of a family of wealthy and distinguished navigators of Palos, who were celebrated for their practical experience, and their adventurous expeditions. Pinzon gave the plan of Columbus his decided approbation, offering to engage in it with purse and person, and to bear the expenses of Columbus in a renewed application to the court.

Friar Juan Perez was confirmed in his faith by the concurrence of his learned and his practical counsellors. He had once been confessor to the queen, and knew that she was always accessible to persons of his sacred calling. He proposed to write to her immediately on the subject, and entreated Columbus to delay his journey until an answer could be received. Columbus was easily persuaded, for he had become attached to Spain by the ties he had formed at Cordova. He felt as if, in leaving it, he was again abandoning his home. He was also reluctant to renew, in another court, the vexations and disappointments he had experienced in Spain and Portugal.

Having agreed to remain, the little council at the convent cast round their eyes for an ambassador to depart upon this momentous mission. They chose one Sebastian Rodriguez, a pilot of Lepi, one of the most shrewd and important personages in this maritime neighbourhood. The queen was, at this time, at Santa Fé, the military city which had been built in the Vega before Granada, after the conflagration of the royal camp.

The honest pilot acquitted himself faithfully, expeditiously, and successfully, in his embassy. He found access to the benignant princess, and delivered the epistle of the friar. Isabella had already been favourably disposed to the proposition of Columbus ; she had received a letter in recommendation of it, likewise, from the Duke of Medina Celi, at the close of his late negociation with the voyager. She wrote in reply to Juan Perez, thanking him for his timely services, and requesting that he would repair immediately to the court, leaving Christopher Columbus in confident hope, until he should hear further from her. This royal letter was brought back by the pilot at the end of fourteen days, and spread great joy in the little junto at the convent. No sooner did the warm-hearted friar receive it, than he saddled his mule, and departed privately, before midnight, for the court. He journeyed through the conquered countries of the Moors, and rode into the newly-erected city of Santa Fé, where the sovereigns were superintending the close investment of the capital of Granada.

The sacred office of Juan Perez gained him a ready entrance in a court distinguished for religious zeal ; and, once admitted to the presence of the queen, his former relation, as father confessor, gave him great freedom of counsel. He pleaded the cause of Columbus with characteristic enthusiasm, speaking, from actual knowledge, of his honourable motives, his professional knowledge and experience, and his perfect capacity to fulfil the undertaking ; he represented the solid principles upon which the enterprise was founded, the advantage that must attend its success, and the glory it must shed upon the Spanish crown. It is probable that Isabella had never heard the proposition urged with such honest zeal and impressive eloquence. Being naturally more sanguine and susceptible than the king, and more open to warm and generous impulses, she was moved by the representations of Juan Perez, which were warmly seconded by her favourite, the Marchioness of Moya, who entered into the affair with a woman's disinterested enthusiasm*. The queen

* *Retrato del Buen Vasallo*, l. ii., cap. 16,

requested that Columbus might be again sent to her, and, with the kind considerateness which characterised her, bethinking herself of his poverty, and his humble plight, ordered that twenty thousand maravedies* in florins should be forwarded to him, to bear his travelling expenses, to provide him with a mule for his journey, and to furnish him with decent raiment, that he might make a respectable appearance at the court.

The worthy friar lost no time in communicating the result of his mission ; he transmitted the money, and a letter, by the hands of an inhabitant of Palos, to the physician Garcia Fernandez, who delivered them to Columbus. The latter complied with the instructions conveyed in the epistle. He exchanged his threadbare garb for one more suited to the sphere of a court, and, purchasing a mule, set out once more, reanimated by hopes, for the camp before Granada†.

* Or 72 dollars, and equivalent to 216 dollars of the present day.

† Most of the particulars of this second visit of Columbus to the convent of La Rabida are from the testimony rendered by Garcia Fernandez, in the law-suit between Diego, the son of Columbus, and the crown.

CHAPTER VII.

APPLICATION TO THE COURT AT THE TIME OF
THE SURRENDER OF GRANADA.

[1492.]

WHEN Columbus arrived at the court, he experienced a favourable reception, and was given in hospitable charge to his steady friend Alonzo de Quintanilla, the accountant-general. The moment, however, was too eventful for his business to receive immediate attention. He arrived in time to witness the memorable surrender of Granada to the Spanish arms. He beheld Boabdil, the last of the Moorish kings, sally forth from the Alhambra, and yield up the keys of that favourite seat of Moorish power ; while the king and queen, with all the chivalry, and rank, and magnificence of Spain, moved forward in proud and solemn procession, to receive this token of submission. It was one of the most brilliant triumphs in Spanish history. After near eight

hundred years of painful struggle, the crescent was completely cast down, the cross exalted in its place, and the standard of Spain was seen floating on the highest tower of the Alhambra. The whole court and army was abandoned to jubilee. The air resounded with shouts of joy, with songs of triumph, and hymns of thanksgiving. On every side were beheld military rejoicings and religious oblations; for it was considered a triumph, not merely of arms, but of Christianity. The king and queen moved in the midst, in more than common magnificence, while every eye regarded them as more than mortal; as if sent by heaven for the salvation and building up of Spain*. The court was thronged by the most illustrious of that warlike country, and stirring era; by the flower of its nobility, by the most dignified of its prelacy, by bards and minstrels, and all the retinue of a romantic and picturesque age. There was nothing but the glittering of arms, the rustling of robes, the sound of music and festivity.

* Mariana, *Hist. de España*, lib. xxv., c. 18.

Do we want a picture of our navigator during this brilliant and triumphant scene? It is furnished by a Spanish writer. “A man obscure and but little known followed at this time the court. Confounded in the crowd of importunate applicants, feeding his imagination in the corners of antechambers with the pompous project of discovering a world, melancholy and dejected in the midst of the general rejoicing, he beheld with indifference, and almost with contempt, the conclusion of a conquest which swelled all bosoms with jubilee, and seemed to have reached the utmost bounds of desire. That man was Christopher Columbus*.”

The moment had now arrived, however, when the monarchs stood pledged to attend to his proposals. The war with the Moors was at an end, Spain was delivered from its intruders, and its sovereigns might securely turn their views to foreign enterprise. They kept their word with Columbus. Persons of confidence were appointed to negotiate with him, among whom

* Clemencin, *Elogio de la Reina Catolica*, p. 20.

was Fernando de Talavera, who, by the recent conquest, had risen to be Archbishop of Granada. At the very outset of their negociation, however, unexpected difficulties arose. So fully imbued was Columbus with the grandeur of his enterprise, that he would listen to none but princely conditions. His principal stipulation was, that he should be invested with the titles and privileges of Admiral and Viceroy over the countries he should discover, with one tenth of all gains, either by trade or conquest. The courtiers who treated with him were indignant at such a demand. Their pride was shocked to see one, whom they had considered as a needy adventurer, aspiring to rank and dignities superior to their own. One observed with a sneer that it was a shrewd arrangement which he proposed, whereby he was secure, at all events, of the honour of a command, and had nothing to lose in case of failure. To this Columbus promptly replied, by offering to furnish one eighth of the cost, on condition of enjoying an eighth of the profits.

His terms, however, were pronounced inadmissible. Fernando de Talavera had always considered Columbus a dreaming speculator, or a needy applicant for bread; but to see this man, who had for years been an indigent and threadbare solicitor in his antechamber, assuming so lofty a tone, and claiming an office that approached to the awful dignity of the throne, excited the astonishment as well as the indignation of the prelate. He represented to Isabella, that it would be degrading to the dignity of so illustrious a crown to lavish such distinguished honours upon a nameless stranger. Such terms, he observed, even in case of success, would be exorbitant; but in case of failure, would be cited with ridicule, as evidence of the gross credulity of the Spanish monarchs.

Isabella was always attentive to the opinions of her ghostly advisers, and the archbishop, being her confessor, had peculiar influence. His suggestions checked her dawning favour. She thought the proposed advantages might be purchased at too great a price. More moderate

conditions were offered to Columbus, and such as appeared highly honourable and advantageous. It was all in vain ; he would not cede one point of his demands, and the negociation was broken off.

It is impossible not to admire the great constancy of purpose, and loftiness of spirit displayed by Columbus, ever since he had conceived the sublime idea of his discovery. More than eighteen years had elapsed since his correspondence with Paolo Toscanelli of Florence, wherein he had announced his design. The greatest part of that time had been consumed in applications at various courts. During that period, what poverty, neglect, ridicule, contumely, and disappointment had he not suffered ! Nothing, however, could shake his perseverance, nor make him descend to terms which he considered beneath the dignity of his enterprise. In all his negociations he forgot his present obscurity, he forgot his present indigence ; his ardent imagination realized the magnitude of his con-

templated discoveries, and he felt himself negotiating about empire.

Though so large a portion of life had worn away in fruitless solicitings,—though there was no certainty that the same weary career was not to be entered upon at any other court,—yet so indignant was he at the repeated disappointments he had experienced in Spain, that he determined to abandon it for ever, rather than compromise his demands. Taking leave of his friends, therefore, he mounted his mule, and sallied forth from Santa Fé in the beginning of February, 1492, on his way to Cordova, from whence he intended to depart immediately for France.

When the few friends who were zealous believers in the theory of Columbus, saw him really on the point of abandoning the country, they were filled with distress, considering his departure an irreparable loss to the nation. Among the number, was Luis de St. Angel, receiver of the ecclesiastical revenues in Aragon.

He determined to make one bold effort to avert the evil. He obtained an immediate audience of the queen, accompanied by Alonzo de Quintanilla, who supported him warmly in all his solicitations. The exigency of the moment gave him courage and eloquence. He did not confine himself to intreaties, he almost mingled reprobation. He expressed his astonishment, that a queen who had evinced the spirit to undertake so many great and perilous enterprises, should hesitate at one where the loss could be so trifling, while the gain might be incalculable. He reminded her how much might be done for the glory of God, the exaltation of the church, and the extension of her own power and dominion. What cause of regret to herself, of triumph to her enemies, of sorrow to her friends, should this enterprise, thus rejected by her, be accomplished by some other power ! He reminded her what fame and dominion other princes had acquired by their discoveries ; here was an opportunity to surpass them all. He intreated

her majesty not to be misled by the assertions of learned men, that the project was the dream of a visionary. He vindicated the judgment of Columbus, and the soundness and practicability of his plans. Neither would even his failure reflect disgrace upon the crown. It was worth the trouble and expense to clear up even a doubt upon a matter of such importance, for it belonged to enlightened and magnanimous princes to investigate questions of the kind, and to explore the wonders and secrets of the universe. He stated the liberal offer of Columbus to bear an eighth of the expense, and informed her that all the requisites for this great enterprise consisted but of two vessels, and about three hundred thousand crowns.

These and many more arguments were urged, with that persuasive power which honest zeal imparts. The Marchioness of Moya, it is said, exerted her eloquence also, to persuade the queen. The generous spirit of Isabella was enkindled. It seemed as if, for the first time, the subject broke upon her mind in its real gran-

deur, and she declared her resolution to undertake the enterprise.

There was still a moment's hesitation. The king looked coldly on the affair, and the royal finances were absolutely drained by the war. Some time must be given to replenish them. How could she draw on an exhausted treasury for a measure to which the king was adverse ! St. Angel watched this suspense with trembling anxiety. The next moment reassured him. With an enthusiasm worthy of herself, and of the cause, Isabella exclaimed, “I undertake the enterprise for my own crown of Castile, and will pledge my jewels to raise the necessary funds.” This was the proudest moment in the life of Isabella ; it stamped her renown for ever as the patroness of the discovery of the New World.

St. Angel, eager to secure this noble impulse, assured her majesty that there would be no need of pledging her jewels, as he was ready to advance the necessary funds. His offer was gladly accepted ; the funds really came from the coffers of Aragon ; seventeen thousand florins were

advanced by the accountant of St. Angel out of the treasury of king Ferdinand. That prudent monarch, however, took care to have his kingdom indemnified some few years afterwards; for in remuneration of this loan, a part of the first gold brought by Columbus from the New World was employed in gilding the vaults and ceilings of the royal saloon in the grand palace of Saragoza, in Aragon, anciently the Aljaferia, or abode of the Moorish kings*.

The queen despatched a messenger on horseback with all speed, to call back Columbus. He was overtaken two leagues from Granada, at the bridge of Pinos, a pass of the mountains famous for bloody encounters between the Christians and infidels, during the Moorish wars. When the courier delivered his message, Columbus hesitated to subject himself again to the delays and equivocations of the court. When he was informed, however, of the ardour expressed by the queen, and the positive promise she had given, he returned immediately to Santa Fé, confiding in the noble probity of that princess.

* Argensola, Anales de Aragon, l. i., c. 10.

CHAPTER VIII.

ARRANGEMENT WITH THE SPANISH SOVEREIGNS.

[1492.]

ON arriving at Santa Fé, Columbus had an immediate audience of the queen, and the benignity with which she received him atoned for all past neglect. Her favourable countenance dispelled every cloud of doubt and difficulty. The concurrence of the king was readily obtained. His objections had been removed by the mediation of various persons, among whom is particularly mentioned his grand chamberlain and favourite, Juan Cabrero; but it was principally through deference to the zeal displayed by the queen, that he yielded his tardy concurrence. Isabella was thenceforward the soul of this grand enterprise. She was prompted by lofty and generous enthusiasm; while the king remained cold and calculating, in this as in all his other undertakings.

One of the great objects held out by Columbus in his undertaking, was the propagation of the Christian faith. He expected to arrive at the extremity of Asia, at the vast and magnificent empire of the grand khan, and to visit the dependent islands, of which he had read such extravagant accounts in the writings of Marco Polo. In describing these opulent and semi-barbarous regions, he had reminded their majesties of the inclination manifested in former times by the grand khan, to embrace the Christian faith ; and of the missions which had been sent by popes and pious sovereigns, to instruct him and his subjects in Catholic doctrines. He now considered himself about to effect this great work. He contemplated that, by means of his discovery, an immediate intercourse might be opened with this immense empire ; that the whole might speedily be brought into subjection to the church ; and thus, as had been foretold in holy writ, the light of revelation might be extended to the remotest ends of the earth. Ferdinand listened to this suggestion with complacency. He made

his religion subservient to his interests ; and had found in the recent conquest of Granada, that extending the sway of the church might be made a laudable means of extending his own dominions. According to the doctrines of the day, every nation that refused to acknowledge the truths of Christianity, was fair spoil for a Christian invader ; and it is probable that Ferdinand was more stimulated by the accounts given by Columbus of the wealth of Mangi, Cathay, and other provinces belonging to the grand khan, than by any anxiety for the conversion of him and his semi-barbarous subjects.

Isabella had nobler inducements ; she was filled with a pious zeal at the idea of effecting such a great work of salvation. From different motives, therefore, both of the sovereigns accorded with the views of Columbus in this particular, and when he afterwards departed on his voyage, letters were actually given him for the Grand Khan of Tartary.

The ardent enthusiasm of Columbus did not stop here. In the free and unrestrained com-

munications which were now permitted him with the sovereigns, his visionary spirit kindled with his anticipations of the boundless wealth that was to be realized by his discoveries ; and he suggested that the treasures thus acquired, should be consecrated to the pious purpose of rescuing the holy sepulchre of Jerusalem from the power of the infidels. The sovereigns smiled at this sally of the imagination, but expressed themselves well pleased with it, and assured him that, without the funds he anticipated, they should be well disposed to that holy undertaking*. What the king and queen, however, may have considered a mere sally of momentary excitement, was a deep and cherished design of Columbus. It is a curious and characteristic fact, which has never been particularly noticed, that the recovery of the holy sepulchre was one of the great objects of his ambition, meditated throughout the remainder of his life, and solemnly provided for in

* Protesté a vuestras Altezas que toda la ganancia desta mi empresa se gastase en la conquista de Jerusalén, y vuestras Altezas se rieron, y dijeron que les placia, y que sin este tenian aquella ana. Journal of Colomb. Navarrete, t. i., p. 117.

his will. In fact, he considered it as one of the great works for which he was chosen by heaven as an agent, and he afterwards looked upon his great discovery as but a preparatory dispensation of Providence to promote its accomplishment.

A perfect understanding being thus effected with the sovereigns, articles of agreement were ordered to be drawn out by Juan de Coloma, the royal secretary. They were to the following effect:—

1. That Columbus should have, for himself during his life, and his heirs and successors for ever, the office of Admiral in all the lands and continents which he might discover or acquire in the ocean, with similar honours and prerogatives to those enjoyed by the high admiral of Castile in his district.
2. That he should be viceroy and governor-general over all the said lands and continents; with the privilege of nominating three candidates for the government of each island or province, one of whom should be selected by the sovereigns.

3. That he should be entitled to reserve for himself one-tenth of all pearls, precious stones, gold, silver, spices, and all other articles and merchandises, in whatever manner found, bought, bartered, or gained within his admiralty, the costs being first deducted.

4. That he, or his lieutenant, should be the sole judge in all causes and disputes arising out of traffic between those countries and Spain, provided the high admiral of Castile had similar jurisdiction in his district.

5. That he might then, and at all after times, contribute an eighth part of the expense in fitting out vessels to sail on this enterprise, and receive an eighth part of the profits.

The last stipulation, which admits Columbus to bear an eighth of the enterprise, was made in consequence of his indignant proffer, on being reproached with demanding ample emoluments while incurring no portion of the charge. He fulfilled this engagement, through the assistance of the Pinzons of Palos, and added a third vessel

to the armament. Thus one-eighth of the expense attendant on this grand expedition, undertaken by a powerful nation, was actually borne by the individual who conceived it, and who likewise risked his life on its success.

The capitulations were signed by Ferdinand and Isabella, at the city of Santa Fé, in the Vega or plain of Granada, on the 17th of April, 1492. A letter of privilege, or commission to Columbus, of similar purport, was drawn out in form, and issued by the sovereigns in the city of Granada, on the thirtieth of the same month. In this, the dignities and prerogatives of Viceroy and governor were likewise made hereditary in his family; and he and his heirs were authorized to prefix the title of Don to their names; a distinction accorded in those days only to persons of rank and estate, though it has since lost all value, from being universally used in Spain.

All the royal documents issued on this occasion bore equally the signatures of Ferdinand and Isabella, but her separate crown of Castile defrayed all the expense; and, during her life,

few persons, except Castilians, were permitted to establish themselves in the new territories*.

The port of Palos de Moguer in Andalusia was fixed on as the place where the necessary armament was to be fitted out. The inhabitants of this port, in consequence of some misconduct, had been condemned by the royal council to serve the crown, for one year, with two armed caravels. A royal order was signed on the 30th of April, commanding the authorities of Palos to have the two caravels ready for sea within ten days after receiving this notice, and to place them and their crews at the disposal of Columbus. The latter was likewise empowered to procure and fit out a third vessel. The crews of all three were to receive the ordinary wages of seamen employed in armed vessels, and to be paid four months in advance. They were to sail in such direction as Columbus, under the royal authority, should command, and were to obey him in all things, with merely one stipulation, that neither he nor they were to go to St.

* Charlevoix, Hist. S. Domingo, l. i., p. 79.

George la Mina, on the coast of Guinea, nor any other of the lately discovered possessions of Portugal. A certificate of their good conduct, signed by Columbus, was to be the discharge of their obligation to the crown*.

Orders were likewise issued by the sovereigns, addressed to the public authorities, and people of all ranks and conditions in the maritime boards of Andalusia, commanding them to furnish supplies and assistance of all kinds, at reasonable prices, for the fitting out of the vessels; and penalties were denounced on such as should cause any impediment. No duties were to be exacted for any articles furnished to the vessels; and all criminal processes against the persons or property of any individual engaged in the expedition, were to be suspended during his absence, and for two months after his return †.

A home-felt mark of favour, characteristic of the kind and considerate heart of Isabella, was

* Navarrete, *Collec. de Viages*, t. ii., doc. 6.

† *Idem.* doc. 8, 9.

accorded to Columbus before his departure from the court. An albala, or letter-patent, was issued by the queen on the 8th of May, appointing his son Diego page to Prince Juan, the heir apparent, with an allowance for his support; an honour granted only to the sons of persons of distinguished rank *.

Thus gratified in his dearest wishes, after a course of delays and disappointments sufficient to have reduced any ordinary man to despair, Columbus took leave of the court on the 12th of May, and set out joyfully for Palos. Let those who are disposed to faint under difficulties, in the prosecution of any great and worthy undertaking, remember that eighteen years elapsed after the time that Columbus conceived his enterprise, before he was enabled to carry it into effect; that most of that time was passed in almost hopeless solicitation, amidst poverty, neglect, and taunting ridicule; that the prime of his life had wasted away in the struggle, and that

* Navarrete, *Collec. de Viages*, t. ii., document 11.

when his perseverance was finally crowned with success, he was about his fifty-sixth year. His example should encourage the enterprising never to despair.

CHAPTER IX.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE EXPEDITION AT THE
PORT OF PALOS.

COLUMBUS once more presented himself at the gates of the convent of La Rabida, but he now appeared in triumph. He was received with open arms by the worthy prior, and again became his guest during his sojourn at Palos *. The character and station of Juan Perez gave him great importance in the neighbourhood, and he exerted it to the utmost in support of the desired enterprise. Attended by this zealous friend, Columbus repaired on the 23rd of May to the church of St. George in Palos. There the royal order for two caravels to be furnished by the town, and put at his disposition, was formally read by the notary public of the place, in presence of the alcaldes and regidores, and many of the inhabitants, and full compliance was promised †.

* Oviedo, *Cronica de las Indias*, l. ii., c. 5.

† Navarrete, *Collec. de Viages*, t. ii., doc. 7.

When the nature of the intended expedition came to be known, however, astonishment and a degree of horror prevailed throughout the place. The inhabitants considered the ships and crews demanded of them, in the light of sacrifices devoted to destruction. The owners of vessels refused to furnish them for so desperate a service, and the boldest seamen shrunk from such a wild and chimerical cruise into the wilderness of the ocean. All the frightful tales and fables, with which ignorance and superstition are prone to people obscure and mysterious regions, were conjured up concerning the unknown parts of the deep, and circulated by the gossips of Palos, to deter any one from embarking in the enterprise.

Nothing can be a stronger evidence of the bold nature of this undertaking, than the extreme dread with which it was regarded by a maritime community, composed of some of the most adventurous navigators of the age. Notwithstanding the peremptory tenor of the Royal order, and the promise of compliance on the part of the

magistrates, weeks elapsed without any thing being done in the fulfilment of its demands. The worthy prior of La Rabida backed the applications of Columbus with all his influence and eloquence,—but in vain, not a vessel was to be procured.

Upon this, more absolute mandates were issued by the Sovereigns, dated the 20th of June, ordering the magistrates of the coast of Andalusia to press into the service any vessels they might think proper, belonging to Spanish subjects, and to oblige the masters and crews to sail with Columbus in whatever direction he should be sent by royal command. Juan de Peñalosa, an officer of the royal household, was sent to see that this order was properly complied with, receiving two hundred maravedies a day, as long as he was occupied in the business, which sum was to be exacted from such as should be disobedient and delinquent; together with other penalties expressed in the mandate. This letter was acted upon by Columbus in Palos and the neighbouring town of Moguer, but apparently with as little

success as the preceding. The communities of those places were thrown into complete confusion : altercations and disturbances took place, but nothing of consequence was effected.

At length Martin Alonzo Pinzon, a rich and enterprising navigator, who has already been mentioned, came forward and took a decided and personal interest in the expedition. What understanding he had with Columbus, as to his remuneration, does not appear. In the testimony given many years afterwards, in the suit between Don Diego, the son of Columbus, and the crown, it was affirmed by several witnesses, that Pinzon was to divide with him his share of the profits ; but the evidence in that lawsuit was so full of contradictions and palpable falsehoods, that it is difficult to discover the proportion of truth which it may have contained. As no immediate profits resulted from the expedition, no claim of the kind was brought forward. Certain it is, that the assistance of Pinzon was most timely and efficacious ; and many of the witnesses in that suit concurred in declaring, that, but for him, it would

have been impossible to fit out the necessary armament. He, and his brother Vicente Yañes Pinzon, likewise a navigator of great courage and ability, who afterwards rose to distinction, possessed vessels and had seamen in their employ. They were related also to many of the seafaring inhabitants of Palos and Moguer, and had great influence throughout the neighbourhood. It is supposed that they supplied Columbus with funds to pay the eighth share of the expense which he was bound to advance. They furnished, also, one, at least, of the ships, and they resolved to take commands, and sail in the expedition. Their example had a wonderful effect, and, aided by their persuasions, induced a great number of their relatives and friends to embark; so that, through their strenuous exertions, the vessels were ready for sea within a month after they had thus engaged in their equipment*.

After the great difficulties made by various courts in furnishing this expedition, it is surprising how inconsiderable an armament was

* Evidence of Ariaz Perez in the lawsuit.

required. It is evident that Columbus had reduced his requisitions to the narrowest limits, lest any great expense should cause impediment. Three small vessels were apparently all that he had requested. Two of them were light barques, called caravels, not superior to river and coasting craft of more modern days. Representations of this class of vessels exist in old prints and paintings*. They are delineated as open, and without deck in the centre, but built up high at the prow and stern, with forecastles and cabins for the accommodation of the crew. Peter Martyr, the learned cotemporary of Columbus, says that only one of the three vessels was decked †. The smallness of the vessels was considered an advantage by Columbus, in a voyage of discovery, enabling him to run close to the shores, and to enter shallow rivers and harbours. In his third voyage, when coasting the gulph of Paria, he complained of the size of his ship, being nearly a hundred tons burthen. But

* See Illustrations, article SHIPS OF COLUMBUS.

† P. Martyr, Decad. 1., l. i.

that such long and perilous expeditions into unknown seas, should be undertaken in vessels without decks, and that they should live through the violent tempests by which they were frequently assailed, remain among the singular circumstances of these daring voyages.

During the equipment of the vessels, troubles and difficulties continued to arise. One, at least, of the vessels, named the Pinta, together with its owner and people, had been pressed into the service by the magistrates, under the arbitrary mandate of the sovereigns; and it is a striking instance of the despotic authority exercised over commerce in those times, that respectable individuals should thus be compelled to engage, with persons and ships, in what appeared to them a mad and desperate enterprise. The owners of this vessel, Gomez Rascon and Christopher Quintero, showed the greatest repugnance to the voyage, and took an active part in certain quarrels and contentions which occurred*. Various mariners had, likewise, been compelled to

* Journal of Columbus, Navarrete, t. i., p. 4. Hist. del Almirante, c. 15.

embark in the other ships ;—all kinds of obstacles were thrown in the way, to retard or defeat the voyage, by these people and their friends. The caulkers employed upon the vessels did their work in a careless and imperfect manner, and, on being commanded to do it over again, they absconded* ; some of the seamen, who had enlisted willingly, repented of their hardihood, or were dissuaded by their relatives, and sought to retract ; others deserted and concealed themselves. Everything had to be effected by the most harsh and arbitrary measures, and in defiance of popular prejudice and opposition.

At length, by the beginning of August, every difficulty was vanquished, and the vessels were ready for sea. The largest, which had been prepared expressly for the voyage, and was decked, was called the Santa Maria ; on board of this ship Columbus hoisted his flag. The second, called the Pinta, was commanded by Martin Alonzo Pinzon, accompanied by his brother, Francisco Martin, as pilot. The third, called the

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., l. i., c. 77. MS.

Niña, had latine sails, and was commanded by the third of the brothers, Vicente Yañez Pinzon. There were three other pilots, Sancho Ruiz, Pedro Alonzo Niño, and Bartholomeo Roldan. Roderigo Sanchez, of Segovia, was inspector-general of the armament, and Diego de Arana, a native of Cordova, chief alguazil. Roderigo de Escobar went as royal notary, an officer always sent in the armaments of the crown, to take official notes of all transactions. There were, also, a physician and a surgeon, together with various private adventurers, several servants, and ninety mariners—making, in all, one hundred and twenty persons*.

Previous to departing on his voyage, Columbus took his son Diego from the convent of La Rábida, and placed him under the guardianship of Juan Rodriguez Cabezudo, an inhabitant of the town of Moguer, and Martin Sanchez, an ecclesiastic of the same place†; probably to give him

* Charlevoix, Hist. St. Doming., I. i. Muñoz, Hist. Nuevo Mundo, I. ii.

† Testimony of Juan Rodriguez Cabezudo, in the lawsuit between Don Diego Columbus and the fiscal.

some knowledge of the world, previous to his being sent to court.

The squadron being ready to put to sea, Columbus, impressed with the solemnity of his undertaking, confessed himself to the friar Juan Perez, and partook of the communion. His example was followed by his officers and crew, and they entered upon their enterprise, full of awe, and with the most devout and affecting ceremonials, committing themselves to the especial guidance and protection of Heaven. A deep gloom was spread over the whole community of Palos at their departure, for almost every one had some relative or friend on board of the squadron. The spirits of the seamen, already depressed by their own fears, were still more cast down at the affliction of those they left behind, who took leave of them with tears and lamentations, and dismal forebodings, as of men they were never to behold again.

B O O K III.

CHAPTER I.

DEPARTURE OF COLUMBUS ON HIS FIRST VOYAGE.

[1492.]

IT was on Friday, the 3rd of August, 1492, early in the morning, that Columbus set sail on his first voyage of discovery. He departed from the bar of Saltes, a small island formed by the arms of the river Odiel, in front of the town of Huelva, steering, in a south-westerly direction, for the Canary islands, from whence it was his intention to strike due west. Of this voyage he commenced a regular journal, intended for the inspection of the Spanish sovereigns. It opened with a stately prologue, wherein, in the following words, were set forth the motives and views which led to his expedition.

“ In nomine D. N. Jesu Christi : Whereas
“ most Christian, most high, most excellent,
“ and most powerful princes, king and queen
“ of the Spains, and of the islands of the sea,
“ our sovereigns, in the present year of 1492,
“ after your highnesses had put an end to the
“ war with the Moors who ruled in Europe,
“ and had concluded that warfare in the great
“ city of Granada, where, on the second of Ja-
“ nuary of this present year, I saw the royal
“ banners of your highnesses placed by force of
“ arms on the towers of the Alhambra, which
“ is the fortress of that city, and beheld the
“ Moorish king sally forth from the gates of the
“ city, and kiss the royal hands of your high-
“ nesses and of my lord the prince ; and imme-
“ diately in that same month, in consequence
“ of the information which I had given to your
“ highnesses of the lands of India, and of a
“ prince who is called the Grand Khan, which
“ is to say, in our language, king of kings, how
“ that many times he and his predecessors had

“ sent to Rome, to entreat for doctors of our
“ holy faith, to instruct him in the same, and that
“ the holy father never had provided him with
“ them, and that so many people were lost, be-
“ lieving in idolatries, and imbibing doctrines
“ of perdition ; therefore, your highnesses, as
“ Catholic Christians and princes, lovers and
“ promoters of the holy Christian faith, and
“ enemies of the sect of Mahomet, and of all
“ idolatries and heresies, determined to send me,
“ Christopher Columbus, to the said parts of
“ India, to see the said princes, and the people,
“ and lands, and discover the nature and dispo-
“ sition of them all, and the means to be taken
“ for the conversion of them to our holy faith ;
“ and ordered that I should not go by land to
“ the East, by which it is the custom to go, but
“ by a voyage to the West, by which course,
“ unto the present time, we do not know for
“ certain that any one hath passed. Your high-
“ nesses, therefore, after having expelled all the
“ Jews from your kingdoms and territories, com-
“ manded me, in the same month of January,

“ to proceed with a sufficient armament to the
“ said parts of India ; and for this purpose
“ bestowed great favours upon me, ennobling
“ me, that thenceforward I might style myself
“ Don, appointing me high admiral of the Ocean
“ Sea, and perpetual viceroy and governor of
“ all the islands and continents I should discover
“ and gain, and which henceforward may be
“ discovered and gained in the Ocean Sea ; and
“ that my eldest son should succeed me, and so
“ on, from generation to generation, for ever.
“ I departed, therefore, from the city of Granada
“ on Saturday the 12th of May, of the same
“ year 1492, to Palos, a sea-port, where I armed
“ three ships well calculated for such service,
“ and sailed from that port well furnished with
“ provisions, and with many seamen, on Friday
“ the 3rd of August of the same year, half an
“ hour before sunrise, and took the route for
“ the Canary islands of your highnesses, to steer
“ my course thence, and navigate until I should
“ arrive at the Indies, and deliver the embassy
“ of your highnesses to those princes, and accom-

“ plish that which you had commanded. For
“ this purpose, I intend to write during this
“ voyage very punctually, from day to day, all
“ that I may do, and see, and experience, as
“ will hereafter be seen. Also, my sovereign
“ princes, beside describing each night all that
“ has occurred in the day, and in the day the
“ navigation of the night, I propose to make
“ a chart, in which I will set down the waters
“ and lands of the ocean sea, in their proper
“ situations, under their bearings ; and, further,
“ to compose a book, and illustrate the whole
“ in picture by latitude from the equinoctial, and
“ longitude from the West ; and upon the whole
“ it will be essential that I should forget sleep,
“ and attend closely to the navigation, to ac-
“ complish these things, which will be a great
“ labour*.”

Thus are formally and expressly stated by Columbus the objects of this extraordinary voyage. The material facts still extant of his journal will

* Navarete, Collec. Viag., t. i., p. 1.

be found incorporated in the present work*. As a guide by which to sail, he had prepared a map, or chart, improved upon that sent him by Paolo Toscanelli. Neither of these now exist, but the globe, or planisphere, finished by Martin Behem in this year of the admiral's first voyage, is still extant, and furnishes an idea of what the chart of Columbus must have been. It exhibits the coasts of Europe and Africa, from the south of Ireland to the end of Guinea, and opposite to them, on the other side of the Atlantic, the extremity of Asia, or, as it was termed, India. Between them is placed the island of Cipango (or Japan), which, according to Marco

* An abstract of this journal, made by Las Casas, has recently been discovered, and is published in the first volume of the collection of Señor Navarrete. Many passages of this abstract had been previously inserted by Las Casas in his History of the Indies, and the same journal had been copiously used by Fernando Columbus in the history of his father. In the present account of this voyage, the author has made use of the journal contained in the work of Señor Navarrete, the manuscript History of Las Casas, the History of the Indies by Herrera, the Life of the Admiral by his Son, the Chronicle of the Indies by Oviedo, the manuscript History of Ferdinand and Isabella by Anarez Bernaldez, curate of Los Palacios, and the Letters and Decades of the Ocean by Peter Martyr; all of whom, with the exception of Herrera, were contemporaries and acquaintances of Columbus. These are the principal authorities which have been consulted, though scattered lights have occasionally been obtained from other sources.

Polo, lay fifteen hundred miles distant from the Asiatic coast. In his computations Columbus advanced this island about a thousand leagues too much to the east ; supposing it to lie in the situation of Florida*, and at this island he hoped first to arrive. The exultation of Columbus at finding himself, after so many years of baffled hope, at length fairly launched on his grand enterprise, was checked by his want of confidence in the resolution and perseverance of his crews. As long as he remained within reach of Europe there was no security that, in a moment of repentance and alarm, they might not unanimously renounce the prosecution of the voyage, and insist on a return. Symptoms soon appeared to warrant his apprehensions. On the third day the Pinta made signal of distress : her rudder was discovered to be broken and unhung. This Columbus surmised to be done through the contrivance of the owners of the caravel, Gomez Rascon and Christoval Quintero, to disable their vessel, and cause her to be left behind. As has

* Maltebrun, Geog. Universel, t. ii., p. 283.

already been observed, they had been pressed into the service greatly against their will, and their caravel seized upon for the expedition, in conformity to the royal orders.

Columbus was much disturbed at this occurrence. It gave him a foretaste of further difficulties to be apprehended from crews partly enlisted on compulsion, and all full of doubt and foreboding. Trivial obstacles, might, in the present critical state of his voyage, spread panic and mutiny through his ships, and entirely defeat the purpose of the expedition.

The wind was blowing strongly at the time, so that he could not render assistance without endangering his own vessel. Fortunately, Martin Alonzo Pinzon commanded the ship, and being an adroit and able seaman, he succeeded in securing the rudder with cords, so as to bring the vessel into management. This, however, was but a temporary and inadequate expedient; the fastenings gave way again on the following day, and the other ships were obliged to shorten sail until the rudder could be secured.

This damaged state of the Pinta, as well as her being in a leaky condition, determined the admiral to touch at the Canary Islands, and seek a vessel to replace her. He considered himself not far from those islands, though a different opinion was entertained by the pilots of the squadron. The event proved his superiority in taking observations and keeping reckonings, for they came in sight of the Canaries on the morning of the 9th.

They were detained upwards of three weeks among these islands, seeking in vain to find another vessel. They were obliged, therefore, to make a new rudder for the Pinta, and repair her as well as they were able for the voyage. The latine sails of the Niña were also altered into square sails, that she might work more steadily and securely, and be able to keep company with the other vessels.

While sailing among these islands, they passed in sight of Teneriffe, whose lofty peak was sending out volumes of flames and smoke. The crew were terrified at sight of this eruption, being ready to take alarm at any extraordinary phe-

nomenon, and to construe it into a disastrous portent. Columbus took great pains to dispel their apprehensions, explaining the natural causes of those volcanic fires, and verifying his explanations by citing Mount Etna, and other well-known volcanoes.

While taking in wood and water and provisions, in the island of Gomera, a vessel arrived from Ferro, which reported that three Portuguese caravels had been seen hovering off that island, with the intention, it was said, of capturing Columbus. The admiral suspected some hostile stratagem on the part of the King of Portugal, in revenge for his having embarked in the service of Spain ; he, therefore, lost no time in putting to sea, anxious to get far from those islands, and out of the track of navigation, trembling lest something might occur to defeat his expedition, commenced under such inauspicious circumstances.

CHAPTER II.

CONTINUATION OF THE VOYAGE. VARIATION OF THE NEEDLE.

[1492.]

EARLY in the morning of the 6th of September, Columbus set sail from the island of Gomera, and now might be said first to strike into the region of discovery, taking leave of these frontier islands of the old world, and steering westward for the unknown parts of the Atlantic. For three days, however, a profound calm kept the vessels loitering with flagging sails within a short distance of the land. This was a tantalizing delay to Columbus, who was impatient to find himself launched far upon the ocean, out of sight of either land or sail ; which, in the pure atmospheres of these latitudes, may be descried at an immense distance. On the following Sunday, the 9th of September, at day-break, he

beheld Ferro, the last of the Canary islands, about nine leagues distant. This was the island from whence the Portuguese caravels had been seen ; he was, therefore, in the very neighbourhood of danger. Fortunately a breeze sprang up with the sun, their sails were once more filled, and in the course of the day the heights of Ferro gradually faded from the horizon.

On losing sight of this last trace of land, the hearts of the crews failed them. They seemed literally to have taken leave of the world. Behind them was every thing dear to the heart of man : country, family, friends, life itself ; before them every thing was chaos, mystery, and peril. In the perturbation of the moment, they despaired of ever more seeing their homes. Many of the rugged seamen shed tears, and some broke into loud lamentations. The admiral tried in every way to soothe their distress, and to inspire them with his own glorious anticipations. He described to them the magnificent countries to which he was about to conduct them. The islands of the Indian seas teeming with gold

and precious stones ; the region of Mangi and Cathay, with their cities of unrivalled wealth and splendour. He promised them land and riches, and every thing that could arouse their cupidity, or inflame their imaginations ; nor were these promises made for purposes of deception, Columbus certainly believed that he should realize them all.

He now gave orders to the commanders of the other vessels, that, in the event of separation by any accident, they should continue directly westward ; but that after sailing seven hundred leagues, they should lay by from midnight until day-light, as at about that distance he confidently expected to find land. In the mean time as he thought it possible he might not discover land within the distance thus assigned, and as he foresaw that the vague terrors already awakened among the seamen would increase with the space which intervened between them and their homes, he commenced a stratagem which he continued throughout the voyage. He kept two reckonings, one correct, in which

the true way of the ship was noted, and which was retained in secret for his own government. In the other, which was open to general inspection, a number of leagues was daily subtracted from the sailing of the ship, so that the crews were kept in ignorance of the real distance they had advanced*.

On the 11th of September, when about one hundred and fifty leagues west of Ferro, they fell in with a part of a mast, which, from its size, appeared to have belonged to a vessel of about a hundred and twenty tons burden, and which had evidently been a long time in the water. The crews, tremblingly alive to every thing that could excite their hopes or fears, looked with rueful eye upon this wreck of some unfortunate voyager drifting ominously at the entrance of those unknown seas.

* It has been erroneously stated that Columbus kept two journals; it was merely in the reckoning or log-book that he deceived the crews. His journal was entirely private, and intended for his own use and the perusal of the sovereigns. In a letter written from Granada in 1803, to Pope Alexander VII., he says, that he had kept an account of his voyages in the style of the Commentaries of Cæsar, which he intended to submit to his Holiness.

On the 13th of September, in the evening, being about two hundred leagues from the island of Ferro, Columbus, for the first time, noticed the variation of the needle, a phenomenon which had never before been remarked. He perceived, about night-fall, that the needle, instead of pointing to the north star, varied about half a point, or between five and six degrees to the north-west, and still more on the following morning. Struck with this circumstance, he observed it attentively for three days, and found that the variation increased as he advanced. He, at first, made no mention of this phenomenon, knowing how ready his people were to take alarm, but it soon attracted the attention of the pilots, and filled them with consternation. It seemed as if the very laws of nature were changing as they advanced, and that they were entering another world, subject to unknown influences *. They apprehended that the compass was about to lose its mysterious virtues, and, without this guide, what was to become of them in a vast and trackless ocean ?

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., l. i., c. 6.

Columbus tasked his science and ingenuity for reasons with which to allay their terrors. He told them that the direction of the needle was not to the polar star, but to some fixed and invisible point. The variation, therefore, was not caused by any fallacy in the compass, but by the movement of the north star itself, which, like the other heavenly bodies, had its changes and revolutions, and every day described a circle round the pole. The high opinion that the pilots entertained of Columbus as a profound astronomer, gave weight to his theory, and their alarm subsided. As yet the solar system of Copernicus was unknown; the explanation of Columbus, therefore, was highly plausible and ingenious, and it shews the vivacity of his mind, ever ready to meet the emergency of the moment. The theory may at first have been advanced merely to satisfy the minds of others, but Columbus appears, subsequently, to have remained satisfied with it himself. The phenomenon has now become familiar to us, but we still continue ignorant of its cause. It is one of those mysteries of

nature open to daily observation and experiment, and apparently simple from their familiarity, but which, on investigation, make the human mind conscious of its limits ; baffling the experience of the practical, and humbling the pride of science.

CHAPTER III.

CONTINUATION OF THE VOYAGE. VARIOUS
TERRORS OF THE SEAMEN.

[1492.]

ON the 14th of September, the voyagers were rejoiced by the sight of what they considered harbingers of land. A heron, and a tropical bird called the *rabo de junco**, hovered about the ships, neither of which are supposed to venture far to sea. On the following night, they were struck with awe at beholding a meteor, or, as Columbus calls it in his journal, a great flame of fire, which seemed to fall from the sky into the sea, about four or five leagues distant. These meteors, common in warm climates, and especially under the tropics, are always seen in the serene azure sky of those latitudes, falling, as it were, from the heavens; but never beneath a cloud. In the transparent atmosphere

* The water-wagtail.

of one of those beautiful nights, where every star shines with the purest lustre, they often leave a luminous train behind them which lasts for twelve or fifteen seconds, and may well be compared to a flame.

The wind had hitherto been favourable, with occasional, though transient, clouds and showers. They had made great progress each day, though Columbus, according to his secret plan, contrived to suppress several leagues in the daily reckoning left open to the crew.

They had now arrived within the influence of the trade winds, which, following the sun, blows steadily from east to west between the tropics, and sweeps over a few adjoining degrees of the ocean*. With this propitious breeze directly aft, they were wafted gently but speedily over a tranquil sea, so that for many days they did not shift a sail. Columbus perpetually recurs to the bland and temperate serenity of the weather, which in this tract of the ocean is soft and refreshing, without being cool. In his artless and

* See Illustrations, article WINDS.

expressive language, he compares the pure and balmy mornings to those of April in Andalusia, and observes that they wanted but the song of the nightingale to complete the illusion. “He had reason to say so,” observes the venerable Las Casas; “for it is marvellous the suavity which we experience when half way towards these Indies; and the more the ships approach the lands, so much more do they perceive the temperance and softness of the air, the clearness of the sky, and the amenity and fragrance sent forth from the groves and forests; much more certainly than in April in Andalusia*.”

They now began to see large patches of herbs and weeds floating on the surface of the water, all drifting from the west, and increasing in quantity as they advanced. Some of these weeds were such as grow about rocks, others such as are produced in rivers; some were yellow and withered, others so green as to have apparently been recently washed from land. On one of these patches was a live crab, which Columbus

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., I. i., c. 36. MS.

carefully preserved. They saw also a white tropical bird, of a kind which never sleeps upon the sea. Tunny fish also played about the ships, one of which was killed by the crew of the Niña. Columbus now called to mind the account given by Aristotle of certain ships of Cadiz, which, coasting the shores outside of the straits of Gibraltar, were driven westwards by an impetuous east wind, until they reached a certain part of the ocean, where it was covered with vast fields of weeds, resembling sunken islands, and among which they beheld many tunny fish. He supposed himself arrived in this weedy sea, as it had been called, from which the ancient mariners had turned back in dismay, but which he regarded with animated hope, as indicating the vicinity of land. Not that he had any idea of yet reaching the object of his search, the eastern end of Asia ; for, according to his computation, he had come but three hundred and sixty leagues* since leaving the Canary Islands, and he placed the main land of India much farther on.

* Of twenty to the degree of latitude, the unity of distance used throughout this work.

On the 18th of September the same weather continued ; a soft steady breeze from the east filled every sail, while, to use the words of Columbus, the sea was as calm as the Guadalquivir at Seville. He had fancied that he perceived the water of the sea to grow fresher as he advanced, and he noticed this as a proof of the superior sweetness and purity of the air *.

The crews were all in high spirits, each ship striving to get in the advance, to catch the first sight of land. Alonzo Pinzon hailing the admiral from the Pinta, informed him that from the flight of a great number of birds which he had seen, and from certain indications in the northern horizon, he thought there was land in that direction. As his vessel was a fast sailer, therefore, he crowded canvass and kept in the advance.

There was, in fact, a cloudiness in the north, such as often hangs over land, and at sunset it assumed such shapes and masses that many fancied they beheld islands ; there was a universal wish, therefore, to steer for that quarter : Colum-

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., I. i., cap. 36.

bus, however, was persuaded that they were mere illusions. Every one who has made a sea-voyage must have witnessed the deceptions caused by clouds resting upon the horizon, especially about sunset and sunrise ; which the eye, assisted by the imagination and desire, easily converts into the wished-for land. This is particularly the case within the tropics, where the clouds at sunset assume the most singular appearances.

On the following day there were drizzling showers, unaccompanied by wind, which Columbus considered favourable signs : two pelicans also flew on board the ships, birds which he observed seldom fly twenty leagues from land. He sounded, therefore, with a line of two hundred fathoms, but found no bottom. He supposed he might be passing between islands, which lay both to the north and south ; but he was unwilling to waste the present favourable breeze by going in search of them. Beside, he had confidently affirmed that land was to be found by keeping steadfastly to the west ; his whole expedition had been founded on such a presumption : he should,

therefore, risk all credit and authority with his people, were he to appear to doubt and waver, and to go groping blindly from point to point of the compass. He resolved, therefore, to keep one bold course, always westward, until he should reach the coast of India ; and afterwards, if advisable, to seek these islands on his return *.

Notwithstanding the precaution which had been taken to keep the people ignorant of the distance they had sailed, they were now growing extremely uneasy at the length of the voyage. They had advanced much farther west than ever man had sailed before, and though already beyond the reach of succour, still they continued daily leaving vast tracts of ocean behind them, and pressing onward and onward into that apparently boundless abyss. It is true they had been flattered by various indications of land, and still others were occurring ; but all mocked them with vain hopes : after being hailed with a transient joy, they passed away, one after another, and

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 30. Extracts [from Journal of Columb., Navarrete, vii. 1.

the same interminable expanse of sea and sky continued to extend before them. Even the favourable wind, which seemed as if providentially sent to waft them to the new world, with such bland and gentle breezes, was now conjured by their ingenious fears into a singular cause of alarm ; for they began to imagine that the wind, in these seas, always prevailed from the east, and if so, would never permit their return to Spain.

Columbus endeavoured in every way to soothe these rising fears, sometimes by argument and expostulation, sometimes by awakening fresh hopes, and pointing out new signs of land. On the 20th of September, the wind veered with light breezes from the south-west. These, though adverse to their progress, had a cheering effect upon the people, as they proved that the wind did not always prevail from the west*. Several birds also visited the ships, three of which were of a small kind, which keep about groves and orchards, and which came singing in

* Mucho me fue necesario este viento contrario, porque mi gente andaban muy estimulados que pensaban que no ventaban estos mares vientos para volver á España. Journal of Columb., Navarrete, t.i., p. 12.

the morning, and flew away again in the evening. Their song was wonderfully cheering to the hearts of the dismayed mariners, who hailed it as the voice of land. The larger fowl, they observed, were strong of wing, and might venture far to sea, but such small birds were too feeble to fly far, and their singing showed that they were not exhausted by their flight.

On the following day there was either a profound calm, or light winds from the south-west ; the sea, as far as the eye could reach, was covered with weeds, a phenomenon often observed in this part of the ocean, which has sometimes the appearance of a vast inundated meadow. This has been attributed to immense quantities of submarine plants, which grow at the bottom of the sea until ripe, when they are detached by the motion of the waves and currents, and rise to the surface*. These fields of weeds were at first regarded with great satisfaction, but at length they became, in many places, so dense and matted, as in some degree to impede the

* Humboldt, Personal Narrative, b. i., c. 1.

sailing of the ships, which must have been under very little head-way. The crews, ever ready to conceive the most absurd alarm, now called to mind some tale about the frozen ocean, where ships were said to be sometimes fixed immovably. They endeavoured, therefore, to avoid, as much as possible, these floating masses, lest some disaster of the kind might happen to themselves *. Others considered these weeds as proof that the sea was growing shallower, and began to talk of lurking rocks and shoals, and treacherous quicksands, and of the danger of running aground, as it were, in the midst of the ocean, where their vessels might rot and fall to pieces, far out of the track of human aid, and without any shore where the crews might take refuge. They had evidently some confused notion of the ancient story of the sunken island of Atlantis, and feared that they were arriving at that part of the ocean where navigation was said to be obstructed by drowned lands, and the ruins of an ingulphed country.

* Hist. del. Almirante, c. 18.

To dispel these fears, the admiral had frequent recourse to the lead, but though he sounded with a deep sea-line, he still found no bottom. The minds of the crews, however, had gradually become diseased. They were full of vague terrors and superstitious fancies ; they construed every thing into a cause of alarm, and harassed their commander by incessant murmurs.

For three days there was a continuance of light summer airs from the southward and westward, and the sea was as smooth as a mirror. A whale was seen heaving up its huge form at a distance, which Columbus immediately pointed out as a favourable indication, affirming that those fish were generally in the neighbourhood of land. The crews, however, became uneasy at the calmness of the weather. They observed that the contrary winds which they experienced were transient and unsteady, and so light as not to ruffle the surface of the sea, which maintained a sluggish calm, like a lake of dead water. Every thing differed, they said, in these strange regions, from the world to which they had been

accustomed. The only winds which prevailed with any constancy and force, were from the east, and they had not power to disturb the torpid stillness of the ocean ; there was a risk, therefore, either of perishing amidst stagnant and shoreless waters, or of being prevented, by contrary winds, from ever returning to their native country.

Columbus continued, with admirable patience, to reason with these absurd fancies ; observing that the calmness of the sea must undoubtedly be caused by the vicinity of land, in the quarter from whence the wind blew, which, therefore, had not space sufficient to act upon the surface, and to heave up large waves. There is nothing, however, that renders men so deaf to reason as the influence of terror, which multiplies and varies the forms of ideal danger a thousand times faster than the most active wisdom can dispel them. The more Columbus argued, the more boisterous became the murmurs of his crew, until, on Sunday, the 25th of September, there came on a heavy swell of the sea, unaccompanied

by wind. This is a phenomenon that often occurs in the broad ocean, being either the expiring undulations of some past gale, or the movement given to the sea by some distant current of wind ; it was nevertheless regarded with astonishment by the mariners, and dispelled the imaginary terrors occasioned by the calm.

Columbus, who considered himself under the immediate eye and guardianship of heaven in the solemn enterprise, intimates in his journal, that this swelling of the sea seemed providentially ordered to allay the rising clamours of his crew ; comparing it to that which so miraculously aided Moses when conducting the children of Israel out of the captivity of Egypt*.

* Como la mar estuviese mansa y llana murmuraba la gente diciendo, que, pues por alli no habia mar grande que nunca ventaria para volver a Espana ; pero despues alzose mucho la mar y sin viento, que los asombraba ; por lo cual dice aqui el Almirante ; *asi que muy necesario me fue la mar alta, que no parecio, Salvo el tiempo de los Judios cuando salieron de Egipto contra Moyses que los sacaba de captiverio.*—Journ. of Columb., Navarrete, t. i.

CHAPTER IV.

CONTINUATION OF THE VOYAGE. DISCOVERY
OF LAND.

[1492.]

THE situation of Columbus was daily becoming more and more critical. In proportion as he approached the regions where he expected to find land, the impatience of his crews augmented. The favourable signs which had increased his confidence, were now derided by them as delusive ; and there was danger of their rebelling, and obliging him to turn back, when on the point of realizing the object of all his labours. They beheld themselves with dismay still wasted onward, over the boundless wastes of what appeared to them a mere watery desert, surrounding the habitable world. What was to become of them should their provision fail ? Their ships were too weak and defective even for the great voyage they had already made, but if they were

still to press forward, adding at every moment to the immense expanse which already divided them from land, how should they ever be able to return, having no port where they might victual and refit?

In this way they fed each other's discontents, gathering together in the retired parts of the ship, at first in little knots of two and three, which gradually increased and became formidable, joining together and strengthening each other in mutinous opposition to the admiral. They exclaimed against him as an ambitious desperado, who in a mad phantasy had determined to do something extravagant to render himself notorious. What to him were their sufferings and dangers, when he was evidently content to sacrifice his own life for the chance of distinction? To continue on, in such a mad expedition, was to become the authors of their own destruction. What obligation bound them to persist, or when were the terms of their agreement to be considered as fulfilled? They had already sailed far beyond the limits that man had ventured before; they

had penetrated into remote seas untraversed by a sail. How much further were they to go in quest of a mere imaginary land? Were they to sail on until they perished, or until all return became impossible? Who on the other hand would blame them, were they to consult their safety, and turn their course homeward before it was yet too late? Would they not rather be extolled for their courage in having undertaken a similar enterprise, and their hardihood in persisting in it so far? As to any complaints which the admiral might make of their returning against his will, they would be without weight; for he was a foreigner, a man without friends or influence. His schemes had been condemned by the learned, as idle and visionary, and had been discountenanced by people of all ranks. He had, therefore, no party on his side; but rather a large number whose pride of opinion would be gratified by his failure*.

Such are some of the reasonings by which these men prepared themselves for an open

* Hist. del Almirante, c. 19. Herrera, Hist. Ind., decad. 1, l. i., c. 10.

opposition to the prosecution of the voyage ; and when we consider the natural fire of the Spanish character, impatient of control, and the peculiar nature of these crews, composed in a great part of men sailing on compulsion, we may easily imagine the constant danger there was of open and desperate rebellion. Some there were who did not scruple at the most atrocious instigations. They proposed, as a mode of silencing all after complaints of the admiral, that, should he refuse to turn back, they should throw him into the sea, and give out, on their arrival in Spain, that he had fallen overboard while contemplating the stars and the signs of the heavens with his astronomical instruments,—a report which no one would have either the inclination or the means to controvert *.

Columbus was not ignorant of these mutinous intentions, but he kept a serene and steady countenance, soothing some with gentle words, stimulating the pride or the avarice of the others, and openly menacing the most refractory with

* Hist. del Almirante, c. 19.

signal punishment, should they do any thing to impede the voyage.

On the 25th of September, the wind again became favourable, and they were able to resume their course directly to the west. The airs being light, and the sea calm, the vessels sailed near to each other, and Columbus had much conversation with Martin Alonso Pinzon on the subject of the chart, which the former had sent three days before on board of the Pinta. Pinzon thought that, according to the indications of the map, they ought to be in the neighbourhood of Cipango, and the other islands which the admiral had therein delineated. Columbus partly entertained the same idea, but thought it possible that the ships might have been borne out of their track by the prevalent currents, or that they had not come so far as the pilots had reckoned. He desired that the chart might be returned, and Pinzon tying it to the end of the cord, flung it on board to him. While Columbus, his pilot, and several of his experienced mariners were studying the map, and endeavouring to make

out from it their actual position, they were aroused by a shout from the Pinta, and looking up, beheld Martin Alonso Pinzon mounted on the stern of his vessel ; who cried with a loud voice, “ Land ! land ! Señor, I claim my reward !” pointing at the same time to the south-west, were there was indeed an appearance of land at about twenty-five leagues’ distance. Upon this Columbus threw himself upon his knees and returned thanks to God ; and Martin Alonso repeated the *Gloria in excelsis*, in which he was loudly joined by his own crew and that of the admiral*.

The seamen now mounted to the mast-head or climbed about the rigging, and strained their eyes towards the south-west : all confirmed the assurance of land. The conviction became so strong, and the joy of the people so ungovernable, that Columbus found it necessary to vary from his usual course, and stand all night to the south-west. The morning light, however, put an end to all their hopes, as to a dream. The fancied land proved to be nothing but an

* Journal of Columb., Primer Viage, Navarrete, t. i.

evening cloud, and had vanished in the night. With dejected hearts, they once more resumed their western course, from which Columbus would never have varied, but in compliance with their clamorous wishes.

For several days more they continued on with the same propitious breeze, tranquil sea, and mild, delightful weather. The water was so calm that the sailors amused themselves with swimming about the vessel. Dolphins began to abound, and flying fish, darting into the air, fell upon the decks. The continued signs of land diverted the attention of the crews, and insensibly beguiled them onward.

On the 1st of October, according to the reckoning of the pilot of the admiral's ship, they had come five-hundred and eighty leagues west, since leaving the Canary Islands. The reckoning which Columbus shewed the crew was five hundred and eighty-four, but the reckoning which he kept privately, was seven hundred and seven*. On the following day, the weeds floated from east

* Navarrete, t. i., p. 16.

to west ; and on the third day no birds were to be seen.

The crews now began to fear that they had passed between islands, from one to the other of which the birds had been flying. Columbus had also some doubts of the kind, but refused to alter his westward course. The people began again to utter murmurs and menaces ; but on the following day they were visited by such flights of birds, and the various indications of land became so numerous, that from a state of despondency they passed into one of eager expectation.

A pension of thirty crowns* had been promised by the Spanish government to him who should first discover land. Eager to obtain this reward, the seamen were continually giving the cry of land, on the least appearance of the kind. To put a stop to these false alarms, which produced continual disappointments, Columbus declared that should any one give such notice, and land not be discovered within three days afterwards,

* Equivalent to 117 dollars of the present day.

he should thenceforth forfeit all claim to the reward.

On the evening of the 6th of October, Martin Alonso Pinzon began to lose confidence in their present course, and proposed that they should stand more to the southward. Columbus still, however, refused, and continued towards the west*. Observing this difference of opinion in a person so important in his squadron as Alonso Pinzon, and fearing that chance or design might scatter the ships, he ordered that, should either of the caravels be separated from him, it should stand to the west, and endeavour, as soon as possible, to join company again: directing also, that the vessels should keep near to him at sunrise and sunset, as at these times the state of the atmosphere is most favourable to the discovery of distant land.

On the morning of the 7th of October, at sunrise, several of the admiral's crew thought they beheld land in the west, but so indistinctly that no one ventured to proclaim it, lest he should be

* Journ. of Columbus, Navarrete, t. i, p. 17.

mistaken, and forfeit all chance of the reward: the Niña, however, being a good sailer, pressed forward to ascertain the fact. In a little while a flag was hoisted at her mast-head, and a gun discharged, being the preconcerted signals for land. New joy was awakened throughout the little squadron, and every eye was turned to the west. As they advanced, however, their cloud-built hopes faded away, and before evening the promised land had again melted into air*.

The crews now sank into a degree of dejection proportioned to their recent excitement, when new circumstances occurred to arouse them. Columbus having observed great flights of small field-birds going towards the south-west, concluded they must be secure of some neighbouring land, where they would find food and a resting-place. He knew the importance which the Portuguese voyagers attached to the flight of birds, by following which they had discovered most of their islands. He had now come seven hundred and fifty leagues, the distance at which he had

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 20. Journ. of Columbus, Navarrete, t. i.

computed to find the island of Cipango ; as there was no appearance of it, he might have missed it through some mistake in the latitude. He determined, therefore, on the evening of the 7th of October, to alter his course to the west-south-west, the direction in which the birds generally flew, and continue that direction for at least two days. After all, it was no great deviation from his main course, and would meet the wishes of the Pinzons, as well as be inspiriting to his followers generally.

For three days they stood in this direction, and the further they went the more frequent and encouraging were the signs of land. Flights of small birds of various colours, some of them such as sing in the fields, came flying about the ships, and then continued towards the south-west, and others were heard also flying by in the night. Tunny-fish played about the smooth sea, and a heron, a pelican, and a duck, were seen, all bound in the same direction. The herbage which floated by the ships was fresh and green, as if recently from

land, and the air, Columbus observes, was sweet and fragrant as April breezes in Seville.

All these, however, were regarded by the crews as so many delusions beguiling them on to destruction ; and when on the evening of the third day they beheld the sun go down upon a shoreless horizon, they broke forth into clamorous turbulence. They exclaimed against this obstinacy in tempting fate by continuing on into a boundless sea. They insisted upon turning homeward, and abandoning the voyage as hopeless. Columbus endeavoured to pacify them by gentle words and promises of large rewards ; but finding that they only increased in clamour, he assumed a decided tone. He told them it was useless to murmur, the expedition had been sent by the sovereigns to seek the Indias, and happen what might, he was determined to persevere, until, by the blessing of God, he should accomplish the enterprise*.

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 20., Las Casas, l. i., Journal of Columb., Navarrete Collec. t. i., p. 19.

It has been asserted by various historians, that Columbus, a day or two

Columbus was now at open defiance with his crew, and his situation became desperate. For-

previous to coming in sight of the New World, capitulated with his mutinous crew, promising, if he did not discover land within three days, to abandon the voyage. There is no authority for such an assertion either in the history of his son Fernando or that of the Bishop Las Casas, each of whom had the admiral's papers before him. There is no mention of such a circumstance in the extracts made from the journal by Las Casas, which have recently been brought to light; nor is it asserted by either Peter Martyr or the Curate of Los Palacios, both cotemporaries and acquaintances of Columbus, and who could scarcely have failed to mention so striking a fact, if true. It rests merely upon the authority of Oviedo, who is of inferior credit to either of the authors above cited, and was grossly misled as to many of the particulars of this voyage by a pilot of the name of Hernea Perez Matheos, who was hostile to Columbus. In the manuscript process of the memorable law-suit between Don Diego, son of the admiral, and the fiscal of the crown, is the evidence of one Pedro de Bilbao, who testifies that he heard many times that some of the pilots and mariners wished to turn back, but that the admiral promised them presents, and entreated them to wait two or three days, before which time he should discover land. "Pedro de Bilbao oyo muchas veces que algunos pilotos y marineros querian velverse sino fuera por el Almirante que les prometio dones, les rogó esperasen dos o tres dias i que antes del termino descubriera tierra." This, if true, implies no capitulation to relinquish the enterprise.

On the other hand it was asserted by some of the witnesses in the above-mentioned suit, that Columbus, after having proceeded some few hundred leagues without finding land, lost confidence and wished to turn back; but was persuaded and even piqued to continue by the Pinzons. This assertion carries falsehood on its very face. It is in total contradiction to that persevering constancy and undaunted resolution displayed by Columbus, not merely in the present voyage, but from first to last of his difficult and dangerous career. This testimony was given by some of the mutinous men, anxious to exaggerate the merits of the Pinzons, and to depreciate that of Columbus. Fortunately, the extracts from the journal of the latter, written from day to day with guileless simplicity, and all the air of truth, disprove these fables, and show that on the very day previous to his discovery, he

tunately, however, the manifestations of neighbouring land were such on the following day as no longer to admit a doubt. Beside a quantity of fresh weeds, such as grow in rivers, they saw a green fish of a kind which keeps about rocks ; then a branch of thorn with berries on it, and recently separated from the tree, floated by them ; then they picked up a reed, a small board, and, above all, a staff artificially carved. All gloom and mutiny now gave way to sanguine expectation ; and throughout the day each one was eagerly on the watch, in hopes of being the first to discover the long-sought-for land.

In the evening, when, according to invariable custom on board of the admiral's ship, the mariners

expressed a peremptory determination to persevere, in defiance of all dangers and difficulties.

It is worthy of remark, that on the evening of the 7th of October, before Columbus changed his course to the west-south-west, he was, according to modern calculations, sailing along the twenty-sixth degree of north latitude, nearly due west. This would have taken him among the northern duayos, or Bahama Islands, or rather, with the influence of the gulf stream, would have carried him at once to the eastern coast of Florida. Thus the whole course of Spanish discovery might have taken a direction along the Atlantic shores of North America, and a Spanish population might have been given to the present territories of the United States.

had sung the *salve regina*, or vesper hymn to the Virgin, he made an impressive address to his crew. He pointed out the goodness of God in thus conducting them by such soft and favouring breezes across a tranquil ocean, cheering their hopes continually with fresh signs, increasing as their fears augmented, and thus leading and guiding them to a promised land. He now reminded them of the orders he had given on leaving the Canaries, that, after sailing westward seven hundred leagues, they should not make sail after midnight. Present appearances authorized such a precaution. He thought it probable they would make land that very night; he ordered, therefore, a vigilant look-out to be kept from the forecastle, promising to whomsoever should make the discovery, a doublet of velvet, in addition to the pension to be given by the sovereigns*.

The breeze had been fresh all day, with more sea than usual, and they had made great progress. At sunset they had stood again to the west, and were ploughing the waves at a rapid rate, the Pinta

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 21.

keeping the lead, from her superior sailing. The greatest animation prevailed throughout the ships; not an eye was closed that night. As the evening darkened, Columbus took his station on the top of the castle or cabin on the high poop of his vessel. However he might carry a cheerful and confident countenance during the day, it was to him a time of the most painful anxiety, and now when he was wrapped from observation by the shades of night, he maintained an intense and unremitting watch, ranging his eye along the dusky horizon, in search of the most vague indications of land. Suddenly, about ten o'clock, he thought he beheld a light glimmering at a distance. Fearing that his eager hopes might deceive him, he called to Pedro Gutierrez, gentleman of the king's bed-chamber, and enquired whether he saw a light in that direction; the latter replied in the affirmative. Columbus, yet doubtful whether it might not be some delusion of the fancy, called Rodrigo Sanchez of Segovia, and made the same inquiry. By the time the latter had ascended the round-house, the light

had disappeared. They saw it once or twice afterwards in sudden and passing gleams ; as if it were a torch in the bark of a fisherman, rising and sinking with the waves : or in the hand of some person on shore, borne up and down as he walked from house to house. So transient and uncertain were these gleams, that few attached any importance to them ; Columbus, however, considered them as certain signs of land, and, moreover, that the land was inhabited.

They continued their course until two in the morning, when a gun from the Pinta gave the joyful signal of land. It was first discovered by a mariner named Rodrigo de Triana ; but the reward was afterwards adjudged to the admiral, for having previously perceived the light. The land was now clearly seen about two leagues distant, whereupon they took in sail, and laid to, waiting impatiently for the dawn.

The thoughts and feelings of Columbus in this little space of time must have been tumultuous and intense. At length, in spite of every difficulty and danger, he had accomplished his object,

The great mystery of the ocean was revealed ; his theory, which had been the scoff of sages, was triumphantly established ; he had secured to himself a glory which must be as durable as the world itself.

It is difficult even for the imagination to conceive the feelings of such a man, at the moment of so sublime a discovery. What a bewildering crowd of conjectures must have thronged upon his mind, as to the land which lay before him, covered with darkness. That it was fruitful, was evident from the vegetables which floated from its shores. He thought, too, that he perceived in the balmy air the fragrance of aromatic groves. The moving light which he had beheld, had proved that it was the residence of man. But what were its inhabitants ? Were they like those of the other parts of the globe ; or were they some strange and monstrous race, such as the imagination in those times was prone to give to all remote and unknown regions ? Had he come upon some wild island far in the Indian sea ; or was this the famed Cipango itself, the object of his golden

fancies? A thousand speculations of the kind must have swarmed upon him, as, with his anxious crews, he waited for the night to pass away; wondering whether the morning light would reveal a savage wilderness, or dawn upon spicy groves, and glittering fanes, and gilded cities, and all the splendour of oriental civilization.

B O O K IV.

CHAPTER I.

FIRST LANDING OF COLUMBUS IN THE NEW WORLD.

[1492.]

IT was on the morning of Friday, 12th of October, 1492, that Columbus first beheld the New World. When the day dawned, he saw before him a level and beautiful island several leagues in extent, of great freshness and verdure, and covered with trees like a continual orchard. Though every thing appeared in the wild luxuriance of untamed nature, yet the island was evidently populous, for the inhabitants were seen issuing from the woods, and running from all parts to the shore, where they stood gazing at the ships. They were all perfectly naked, and from their attitudes and gestures appeared to be

lost in astonishment. Columbus made signal for the ships to cast anchor, and the boats to be manned and armed. He entered his own boat, richly attired in scarlet, and bearing the royal standard ; whilst Martin Alonso Pinzon, and Vincent Jañez his brother, put off in company in their boats, each bearing the banner of the enterprise emblazoned with a green cross, having on each side the letters F. and I., the initials of the Castilian monarchs Fernando and Isabel, surmounted by crowns.

As they approached the shores, they were refreshed by the sight of the ample forests, which in those climates have extraordinary beauty of vegetation. They beheld fruits of tempting hue, but unknown kind, growing among the trees which overhung the shores. The purity and suavity of the atmosphere, the crystal transparency of the seas which bathe these islands, give them a wonderful beauty, and must have had their effect upon the susceptible feelings of Columbus. No sooner did he land, than he threw himself upon his knees, kissed the earth, and

returned thanks to God with tears of joy. His example was followed by the rest, whose hearts indeed overflowed with the same feelings of gratitude. Columbus then rising drew his sword, displayed the royal standard, and assembling round him the two Captains, with Rodrigo de Escobido, notary of the armament, Rodrigo Sanchez, and the rest who had landed, he took solemn possession in the name of the Castilian sovereigns, giving the island the name of San Salvador. Having complied with the requisite forms and ceremonies, he now called upon all present to take the oath of obedience to him as admiral and viceroy representing the persons of the sovereigns*.

The feelings of the crew now burst forth in the most extravagant transports. They had recently

* In the *Tablas Cronologicas* of Padre Claudio Clemente is conceived a form of prayer said to have been made by Columbus on this occasion, and which, by order of the Castilian sovereigns, was afterwards used by Balboa, Cortes, and Pizarro, in their discoveries. “*Domine Deus æternæ et omnipotens, sacro tuo verbo cœlum, et terram, et mare creasti; benedicatur et glorificetur nomen tuum, laudetur tua majestas, quæ dignata est per humilium servum tuum, ut ejus sacrum nomen agnoscat et prædicetur in hac altera mundi parte.*” *Tab. Chron. de los Descub.*, decad. 1, Valencia, 1689.

considered themselves devoted men hurrying forward to destruction ; they now looked upon themselves as favourites of fortune, and gave themselves up to the most unbounded joy. They thronged around the admiral, in their overflowing zeal. Some embraced him, others kissed his hands. Those who had been most mutinous and turbulent during the voyage, were now most devoted and enthusiastic. Some begged favours of him, as of a man who had already wealth and honours in his gift. Many abject spirits, who had outraged him by their insolence, now crouched as it were at his feet, begging pardon for all the trouble they had caused him, and offering for the future the blindest obedience to his commands*. The natives of the island, when, at the dawn of day, they had beheld the ships, with their sails set, hovering on their coast, had supposed them some monsters which had issued from the deep during the night. They had crowded to the beach, and watched their movements with awful anxiety. Their veering about,

* Oviedo, l. i., cap. 6. Las Casas, Hist. Ind., l. i., c. 40.

apparently without effort ; the shifting and furling of their sails, resembling huge wings, filled them with astonishment. When they beheld their boats approach the shore, and a number of strange beings clad in glittering steel, or raiment of various colours, landing upon the beach, they fled in affright to their woods. Finding, however, that there was no attempt to pursue, nor molest them, they gradually recovered from their terror, and approached the Spaniards with great awe ; frequently prostrating themselves on the earth, and making signs of adoration. During the ceremonies of taking possession, they remained gazing in timid admiration at the complexion, the beards, the shining armour, and splendid dress of the Spaniards. The admiral particularly attracted their attention, from his commanding height, his air of authority, his dress of scarlet, and the deference which was paid him by his companions ; all which pointed him out to be the commander*. When they had still further recovered from their fears, they

* Las Casas, *ubi sup.*

approached the Spaniards, touched their beards, and examined their hands and faces, admiring their whiteness. Columbus, pleased with their simplicity, their gentleness, and the confidence they reposed in beings who must have appeared to them so strange and formidable, suffered their scrutiny with perfect acquiescence. The wondering savages were won by this benignity ; they now supposed that the ships had sailed out of the crystal firmament which bounded their horizon, or that they had descended from above on their ample wings, and that these marvellous beings were inhabitants of the skies*.

The natives of the island were no less objects of curiosity to the Spaniards, differing, as they did, from any race of men they had ever seen. Their appearance gave no promise of either wealth or civilization, for they were entirely naked, and painted with a variety of colours. With

* The idea that the white men came from heaven was universally entertained by the inhabitants of the New World. When in the course of subsequent voyages the Spaniards conversed with the Cacique Nicaragua, he inquired how they came down from the skies, whether flying or whether they descended on clouds. Herrera, decad. 3, l. iv., cap. 5.

some it was confined merely to some part of the face, the nose, or around the eyes ; with others it extended to the whole body, and gave them a wild and fantastic appearance. Their complexion was of a tawny or copper hue, and they were entirely destitute of beards. Their hair was not crisped, like the recently-discovered tribes of the African coast, under the same latitude, but straight and coarse, partly cut short above the ears, but some locks left long behind and falling upon their shoulders. Their features, though obscured and disfigured by paint, were agreeable ; they had lofty foreheads and remarkably fine eyes. They were of moderate stature and well-shaped ; most of them appeared to be under thirty years of age : there was but one female with them, quite young, naked like her companions, and beautifully formed.

As Columbus supposed himself to have landed on an island at the extremity of India, he called the natives by the general appellation of Indians, which was universally adopted before the true nature of his discovery was known, and has ever

since been extended to all the aborigines of the New World.

The Spaniards soon discovered that these islanders were friendly and gentle in their dispositions, and extremely simple and artless. Their only arms were lances, hardened at the end by fire, or pointed with a flint, or the tooth or bone of a fish. There was no iron to be seen among them, nor did they appear acquainted with its properties; for, when a drawn sword was presented to them, they unguardedly took it by the edge.

Columbus distributed among them coloured caps, glass beads, hawks' bells, and other trifles, such as the Portuguese were accustomed to trade with among the nations of the gold coast of Africa. These they received as inestimable gifts, hanging the beads round their necks, and being wonderfully delighted with their finery, and with the sound of the bells. The Spaniards remained all day on shore, refreshing themselves after their anxious voyage amidst the beautiful groves of the island; they did not return to their ships

until late in the evening, delighted with all that they had seen.

On the following morning, at break of day, the shore was thronged with the natives, who, having lost all dread of what at first appeared to be monsters of the deep, came swimming off to the ships; others came in light barks which they called canoes, formed of a single tree, hollowed, and capable of holding from one man to the number of forty or fifty. These they managed dexterously with paddles, and, if overturned, swam about in the water with perfect unconcern, as if in their natural element, righting their canoes with great facility, and baling them with calabashes *.

They shewed great eagerness to procure more of the toys and trinkets of the white men, not, apparently, from any idea of their intrinsic value, but because every thing from the hands of the strangers possessed a supernatural virtue in their eyes, as having been brought with them from

* The calabashes of the Indias, which served the purposes of glass and earthenware, supplying them with all sorts of domestic utensils, were produced on stately trees of the size of elms,

heaven. They even picked up fragments of glass and earthenware as valuable prizes. They had but few objects to offer in return, except parrots, of which great numbers were domesticated among them, and cotton yarn, of which they had abundance, and would exchange large balls of five and twenty pounds' weight for the merest trifle. They brought also cakes of a kind of bread called cassava, which constituted a principal part of their food, and was afterwards an important article of provisions with the Spaniards. It was formed from a great root called yuca, which they cultivated in fields. This they cut into small morsels, which they grated or scraped, and strained in a press, making it into a broad thin cake, which afterwards dried hard, would keep for a long time, and had to be steeped in water when eaten. It was insipid, but nourishing, though the water strained from it in the preparation was a deadly poison. There was another kind of yuca destitute of this poisonous quality, which was eaten in the root, either boiled or roasted *.

* Acosta, Hist. Ind., I, iv., c. 17.

The avarice of the discoverers was quickly excited by the sight of small ornaments of gold, which some of the natives wore in their noses. These the latter gladly exchanged for glass beads and hawk's bells ; and both parties exulted in the bargain, no doubt admiring each other's simplicity. As gold, however, was an object of royal monopoly in all enterprises of discovery, Columbus forbade any traffic in it without his express sanction ; and he put the same prohibition on the traffic for cotton, reserving to the crown all trade for it, wherever it should be found in any quantity.

He inquired of the natives where this gold was procured. They answered him by signs, pointing to the south ; and he understood them that in that quarter there was a king of great wealth, insomuch, that he was served in great vessels of wrought gold. He understood also, that there was land to the south, the south-west, and the north-west ; and that the people from the latter frequently proceeded to the south-west in quest of gold and precious stones, and in their way

made descents upon the islands, carrying off the inhabitants. Several of the natives showed him the scars of wounds which they informed him they had received in battles with these invaders. It is evident that a great part of this fancied intelligence was the mere construction of the hopes and wishes of Columbus ; for he was under a spell of the imagination, which gave its own shapes and colours to every object. He was persuaded that he had arrived among those islands described by Marco Polo, as lying opposite Cathay, in the Chinese sea, and he construed every thing to accord with the account given of those opulent regions. Thus the enemies which the natives spoke of as coming from the north-west, he concluded to be the people of the mainland of Asia, the subjects of the great Khan of Tartary, who were represented by the Venetian traveller as accustomed to make war upon the islands, and to enslave their inhabitants. The country to the south, abounding in gold, could be no other than the famous island of Cipango ; and the king who was served out of vessels of gold, must be the

monarch whose magnificent city and gorgeous palace covered with plates of gold, had been extolled in such splendid terms by Marco Polo.

The island where Columbus had thus, for the first time, set his foot upon the New World, was called by the natives, Guanahanè. It still retains the name of San Salvador, which he gave to it, though called by the English, Cat Island *. The light which he had seen the evening previous to his making land, may have been on Watling's Island, which lies a few leagues to the east. San Salvador is one of the great cluster of the Guacayos, or Bahama Islands, which stretch south-east and north-west, from the coast of Florida to Hispaniola, covering the northern coast of Cuba.

On the morning of the 14th of October, the admiral set off at day-break with the boats of the ships to reconnoitre the island, directing his course to the north-east. The coast was surrounded by a reef of rocks, within which there

* Some dispute having recently arisen as to the island on which Columbus first landed, the reader is referred for a discussion of this question to the illustration of this work, article FIRST LANDING OF COLUMBUS.

was depth of water and sufficient harbour to receive all the ships in Christendom. The entrance was very narrow; within there were several sand banks, but the water was as still as in a pool*.

The island appeared throughout to be well wooded, with streams of water, and a large lake in the centre. As the boats proceeded, they passed two or three villages, the inhabitants of which, men as well as women, ran to the shores, throwing themselves on the ground, lifting up their hands and eyes, either giving thanks to heaven, or worshipping the Spaniards as supernatural beings. They ran along parallel to the boats, calling after the Spaniards, and inviting them by signs to land, offering them various fruits and vessels of water. Finding, however, that the boats continued on their course, many of the Indians threw themselves into the sea and swam after them, and others followed in canoes. The admiral received them all with kindness and caresses, giving them glass beads and other trifles, which were received with transport as

* Primer viage de Colom., Navarrete, t. I.

celestial presents, for the invariable idea of the savages was, that the white men had come from the skies.

In this way they pursued their course, until they came to a small peninsula, which in two or three days might be separated from the main land, and surrounded with water, and which was, therefore, specified by Columbus as an excellent situation for a fortress. On this there were six Indian cabins, surrounded by groves and gardens as beautiful as those of Castile. The sailors being wearied with rowing, and the island not appearing to the admiral of sufficient importance to induce colonisation, he returned to the ships, taking seven of the natives with him, that they might acquire the Spanish language, and serve as interpreters.

Having taken in a supply of wood and water, they left the island of San Salvador the same evening, the admiral being impatient to prosecute his discoveries, so satisfactorily commenced, and above all, to arrive at the wealthy country to the south, which he flattered himself would prove the famous island of Cipango.

CHAPTER II.

CRUISE AMONG THE BAHAMA ISLANDS.

[1492.]

ON leaving San Salvador, Columbus was at a loss which way to direct his course. He beheld a great number of beautiful islands, green and level and fertile, inviting him in different directions. The Indians on board of his vessel, intimated by signs that they were innumerable, well peopled, and at war with one another. They mentioned the names of above a hundred. Columbus immediately supposed that he had arrived among that archipelago described by Marco Polo as stretching along the coast of Asia, and consisting of seven thousand four hundred and fifty-eight islands, abounding with spices and odiferous trees.

Delighted with the idea, he selected the largest island in sight for his next visit, which appeared

to be about five leagues' distance, and where, he understood from his Indians, the natives were richer than those of San Salvador, wearing bracelets and anklets, and other ornaments of massive gold.

The night coming on, Columbus ordered that the ships should lie to, as the navigation was difficult and dangerous among this group of unknown islands, and he feared to venture upon a strange coast in the dark. In the morning they again made sail, but met with counter currents which delayed their progress, so that it was not until sun-set that they anchored at the island. The next morning (16th) they went on shore, and Columbus took solemn possession, giving the island the name of Santa Maria de la Concepcion. The same scene occurred with the inhabitants as with those of San Salvador. They manifested the same astonishment and awe ; the same gentleness and simplicity, and the same nakedness and absence of all wealth. Columbus looked in vain for bracelets and anklets of gold, or for any other precious articles : they had been either

fictions of his Indian guides, or his own misinterpretations.

Finding that there was nothing in this island to induce delay, he returned on board, and prepared to make sail for another, and much larger one, which lay to the west. At this time one of the Indians of San Salvador, who was on board of the *Niña*, seeing himself about to be borne away by these strangers far from his home, plunged into the sea, and swam to a large canoe filled with natives. The boat of the caravel put off in pursuit, but the Indians skimmed the surface of the sea in their light bark with too much velocity to be overtaken, and, reaching the land, fled like wild deer to the woods. The sailors took the canoe as a prize, and returned on board of the caravel. Shortly afterwards a small canoe approached one of the ships, from a different part of the island, with a single Indian on board, who came to offer a ball of cotton in exchange for hawks' bells. As he paused when close to the vessel, and feared to enter, several sailors threw themselves into the sea and took him prisoner.

Columbus was extremely desirous of dispelling any terror or distrust that might have been awakened in the island by the pursuit of the fugitives, or by the Indian guide who had escaped; considering it of the utmost importance to conciliate the good-will of the natives for the benefit of future voyagers. Having seen all that had passed from his station on the high poop of the vessel, he ordered the captive to be brought to him; the poor Indian was led trembling with fear, and humbly offered his ball of cotton as a gift.

The admiral received him with the utmost benignity, and declining his offering, put a coloured cap upon his head, strings of green beads around his arms, and hawks' bells in his ears, then ordering him and his ball of cotton to be replaced in the canoe, dismissed him, astonished and overjoyed. He ordered that the other canoe, also, which had been seized, and which was fastened to the Niña, should be cast loose, to be regained by its proprietors. When the Indian reached the shore, Columbus could see his countrymen thronging round him, examining and admiring

his finery, and listening to his account of the kind treatment he had experienced.

Such were the gentle and sage precautions continually taken by Columbus to impress the natives with a favourable opinion of the white men. Another instance of the kind occurred after his leaving the island of Conception, when he stood for the larger island, which lay several leagues to the west. When midway across the gulf which separated the two islands, they overtook a single Indian in a canoe. He had a mere morsel of cassava bread, and a calabash of water for his sea-store, and a little red paint, like dragon's blood, for his personal decoration, when he should land. They found, also, a string of glass beads upon him, such as they had given to the natives of San Salvador, which showed that he had come from thence, and was probably passing from island to island, to give notice of the ships. Columbus admired the hardihood of this simple navigator, making such an extensive voyage in so frail a bark. As the island was still distant, he ordered that both the Indian and his canoe

should be taken on board; where he treated him with the greatest kindness, giving him bread and honey to eat, and wine to drink. The water being very calm, they did not reach the island until too dark to anchor, through fear of cutting their cables with rocks. The sea about these islands was so transparent, that in the day time they could see the bottom and choose their ground; and so deep, that at two gun-shot distance there was no anchorage. Hoisting out the canoe of their Indian voyager, therefore, and restoring to him all his effects, they sent him joyfully to shore, to prepare the natives for their arrival, while the ships lay to until morning.

The benevolent treatment of the poor Indian had the desired effect, the natives came in their canoes during the night, eager to see these wonderful and benignant strangers. They surrounded the ships, bringing whatever their islands afforded, fruits and roots, and the pure water of their springs. Columbus distributed trifling presents among them, and to those who came on board he gave sugar and honey.

Landing the next morning, he gave to this island the name of Fernandina, in honour of the king ; it is the same at present called Exuma.

The inhabitants were similar in every respect to those of the preceding islands, excepting that they appeared more ingenious and intelligent. Some of the women wore scanty coverings or aprons of cotton, and others had mantles of the same, but for the most part they were entirely naked. Their habitations were very simple, being in the form of a pavilion or high circular tent, constructed of branches of trees, of reeds and palm leaves. They were kept very clean and neat, and sheltered under beautiful and spreading trees. For beds they had nets of cotton extended from two parts, which they called *hamacs*, a name since adopted into universal use among seamen.

In endeavouring to circumnavigate the island, within two leagues of the north-west cape, Columbus found a noble harbour, sufficient to hold a hundred ships, with two entrances formed by an island which lay in the mouth of it. Here

while the men had landed with the casks, in search of water, he refreshed himself under the shade of the groves, which he says were more beautiful than any he had ever beheld ; the country was as fresh and green as in the month of May in Andalusia ; the trees, the fruits, the herbs, the flowers, the very stones for the most part, as different from those of Spain, as night from day*. The inhabitants gave the same proofs as the other islanders, of being totally unaccustomed to the sight of civilized man. They regarded the Spaniards with awe and admiration, approached them with propitiatory offerings of whatever their poverty or rather their simple and natural mode of life afforded ; the fruits of their fields and groves, the cotton which was their article of greatest value, and their domesticated parrots. When the Spaniards landed in search of water, they took them to the coolest springs, the sweetest and freshest runs, filling their casks, rolling them to the boats, and seeking in every way to gratify their celestial visitors.

* Primer Viage of Colon. Navarrete, t. i.

However this state of primeval poverty might have pleased the imagination of a poet, it was a source of continual disappointment to the Spaniards, whose avarice had been whetted to the quick by the scanty specimens of gold which they had met with, and by the information of golden islands continually given by the Indians.

Leaving Fernandina, on the 19th of October, they steered to the south-east in quest of an island called Saometo, where Columbus understood, from the signs of the guides, that there was a mine of gold, and a king who dwelt in a large city and possessed great treasures, wearing rich clothing and jewels of gold, and being sovereign of all the surrounding islands. They found this island, but neither the monarch nor the mine; either Columbus had misunderstood the natives, or they, measuring things by their own poverty, had exaggerated the paltry state and trivial ornaments of some savage chieftain. Columbus extols, however, the beauty of the island, to which he gave the name of his royal patroness Isabella*.

* At present called Isla Larga and Exumeta.

Delightful as where the others he had visited, he declares that this surpasses them all. Like those it was covered with trees and shrubs and herbs of unknown kind, and of rich tropical vegetation. The climate had the same soft temperature ; the air was delicate and balmy ; the land was higher, with a fine verdant hill ; the coast of a fine sand, gently laved by transparent billows.

Columbus was enchanted by the lovely scenery of this island : “I know not,” says he, “where first to go, nor are my eyes ever weary of gazing on the beautiful verdure.” At the south-west end of the island he found fine lakes of fresh-water, overhung with groves, and surrounded by banks covered with herbage. Here he ordered all the casks of the ships to be filled. “Here are large lakes,” says he, in his journal, “and the groves about them are marvellous, and here and in all the island every thing is green, and the herbage as in April in Andalusia. The singing of the birds is such, that it seems as if one would never desire to depart hence ; there are flocks of parrots which obscure the sun, and other

birds, large and small, of so many kinds and so different from ours, that it is wonderful ; and beside, there are trees of a thousand species, each having its particular fruit and all of marvellous flavour, so that I am in the greatest trouble in the world not to know them, for I am very certain that they are each of great value. I shall bring home some of them as specimens, and also some of the herbs.” Columbus was intent on discovering the drugs and spices of the east, and on approaching this island, had fancied he perceived, in the air which came from it, the spicy odours said to be wafted from the islands of the Indian seas : “ As I arrived at this cape,” says he, “ there came thence a fragrance so good and soft of the flowers or trees of the land, that it was the sweetest thing in the world. I believe there are here many herbs and trees which would be of great price in Spain for tinctures, medicines, and spices, but I know nothing of them, which gives me great vexation *.”

The fish, which abounded in these seas, partook

* Primer Viage de Colon. Navarrete, c. i.

of the novelty which characterised most of the objects in this new world. They rivalled the birds in the tropical brilliancy of their colours, the scales of some of them glancing back the rays of light like precious stones; as they sported about the ships, they flashed gleams of gold and silver through the clear waves; and the dolphins, taken out of their element, delighted the eye with the changes of colours¹ ascribed in fable to the camelion.

No animals were seen in these islands, excepting lizards, the dogs already mentioned, a kind of coney or rabbit called “utia” by the natives, and guanas. The last was regarded with disgust and horror by the Spaniards, supposing it to be a fierce and noxious serpent, but it was found afterwards to be perfectly harmless, and esteemed a great delicacy by the Indians.

For several days Columbus hovered about this island, seeking in vain to find its imaginary monarch, or to establish a communication with him, until, at length, he reluctantly became convinced of his error. No sooner, however, did one delu-

sion fade away, than another succeeded. In reply to the continual inquiries made by the Spaniards, concerning the source from whence they procured their gold, the natives had uniformly pointed to the south. Columbus now began to gather information of an island which lay in that direction, and which was called Cuba, but all that he could collect concerning it from the signs of the natives was coloured, and gilded, and exaggerated by his imagination. He understood it to be of great extent, abounding in gold, and pearls, and spices, and carrying on an extensive commerce in those precious articles ; and that large merchant ships came to trade with its inhabitants.

Comparing these misinterpreted accounts with the coast of Asia as laid down on his map, after the descriptions of Marco Polo, he concluded that this island must be Cipango, and the merchant ships mentioned must be those of the Grand Khan, who maintained an extensive commerce in these seas. He formed his plan accordingly, determining to sail immediately for this island, and make himself acquainted with its ports, cities, and productions,

for the purpose of establishing relations of traffic. He would then seek another great island called Bohio, of which the natives gave likewise marvellous accounts. His sojourn in those islands would depend upon the quantities of gold, spices, precious stones, and other objects of oriental trade which he should find there. After this he would proceed to the mainland of India, which must be within ten days' sail, seek the city Quinsai, which, according to Marco Polo, was one of the most magnificent capitals in the world ; he would there deliver in person the letters of the Castilian sovereigns to the Grand Khan, and, when he received his reply, return triumphantly to Spain with this document, to prove that he had accomplished the great object of his voyage*. Such was the splendid scheme with which Columbus fed his imagination, as he was about to leave the Bahamas in quest of the island of Cuba.

* Journal of Columbus. Navarrete, t. i.

CHAPTER III.

DISCOVERY AND COASTING OF CUBA.

[1492.]

FOR several days the departure of Columbus was delayed by contrary winds and calms, attended by heavy showers, which last had prevailed, more or less, since his arrival among the islands. It was the season of the autumnal rains, which in those torrid climates succeed the parching heats of summer, commencing about the decrease of the August moon, and lasting until the month of November.

At length, at midnight, October 24th, he set sail from the island of Isabella, but was nearly becalmed until mid-day; a gentle wind then sprang up, and, as he observes, began to blow most amorous. Every sail was spread, and he stood towards the west-south-west, the direction in which he was told the land of Cuba lay

from Isabella. After three days navigation, in the course of which he touched at a group of seven or eight small islands, which he called Islas de Arena, supposed to be the present Mucaras islands, and having crossed the Bahama bank and channel, he arrived, on the morning of the 28th October, in sight of the island of Cuba. The part which he first discovered, is supposed to be the coast to the west of Nuevitas del Principe.

As he approached this noble island, he was struck with its magnitude, and the grandeur of its features ; its high and airy mountains, which reminded him of those of Sicily ; its fertile valleys, and long sweeping plains watered by noble rivers ; its stately forests ; its bold promontories, and stretching headlands, which melted away into the remotest distance. He anchored in a beautiful river, free from rocks or shoals, of transparent water, its banks overhung with trees. Here, landing, and taking possession of the island, he gave it the name of Juana, in honour of Prince Juan, and to the river the name of San Salvador.

On the arrival of the ships, two canoes had put off from the shore, but on seeing the boat approach to sound the river for anchorage, they fled in affright. The admiral visited two cabins, abandoned by their terrified inhabitants. They contained but scanty effects ; a few nets made of the fibres of the palm tree, hooks and harpoons of bone, and a few other fishing implements ; and one of the same kind of dogs which he had met with on the smaller islands, which never bark. He ordered that nothing should be taken away or deranged, contenting himself with noting the manner and means of living of the inhabitants.

Returning to his boat, he proceeded for some distance up the river, more and more enchanted with the beauty of the country. The forests which covered each bank were of high and wide spreading trees ; some bearing fruits, others flowers, while in some, both fruit and flower were mingled, bespeaking a perpetual round of fertility : among them were many palms, but different from those of Spain and Africa ; with the

great leaves of these, the natives thatched their cabins.

The continual eulogies made by Columbus on the beauty of the scenery were warranted by the kind of scenery he was beholding. There is a wonderful splendour, variety, and luxuriance in the vegetation of those quick and ardent climates. The verdure of the groves, and the colours of the flowers and blossoms, derive a vividness to the eye from the transparent purity of the air, and the deep serenity of the azure heavens. The forests, too, are full of life, swarming with birds of brilliant plumage. Painted varieties of parrots, and woodpeckers, create a glitter amidst the verdure of the grove, and humming-birds rove from flower to flower, resembling, as has well been said, animated particles of a rainbow. The scarlet flamingos, too, seen sometimes through an opening of a forest in a distant savannah, have the appearance of soldiers drawn up in battalion, with an advanced scout on the alert, to give notice of approaching danger. Nor is the least beautiful part of animated nature the various

tribes of insects that people every plant, displaying brilliant coats of mail, which sparkle to the eye like precious gems *.

Such is the splendour of animal and vegetable creation in these tropical climates, where an ardent sun imparts, in a manner, his own lustre to every object, and quickens nature into exuberant fecundity. The birds, in general, are not remarkable for their notes, for it has been observed that in the feathered race sweetness of song rarely accompanies brilliancy of plumage. Columbus remarks, however, that there were various kinds which sang sweetly among the trees, and he frequently deceived himself in fancying that he heard the voice of the nightingale, a bird unknown in these countries. He was, in fact, in a mood to see every thing through a fond and favouring medium. His heart was full even to overflowing, for he was enjoying the fulfilment of his hopes, and the hard-earned but glorious reward of his toils and perils. Every thing round

* The ladies of Havannah, on gala occasions, wear in their hair numbers of those insects, which have a brilliancy equal to rubies, sapphires, or diamonds.

him was beheld with the enamoured and exulting eye of a discoverer, where triumph mingles with admiration ; and it is difficult to conceive the rapturous state of his feelings, while thus exploring the charms of a virgin world, won by his enterprise and valour.

From his continual remarks on the beauty of the scenery, and from the pleasure which he evidently derived from rural sounds and objects, he appears to have been extremely open to those delicious influences, exercised over some spirits, by the graces and wonders of nature. He gives utterance to these feelings with characteristic enthusiasm, and at the same time with the artlessness and simplicity of diction of a child. When speaking of some lovely scene among the groves, or along the flowery shore of this favoured island, he says, “ one could live there for ever.” —Cuba broke upon him like an elysium. “ It is the most beautiful island,” he says, “ that eyes ever beheld, full of excellent ports and profound rivers.” The climate was more temperate here than in the other islands, the nights being neither

hot nor cold, while the birds and grasshoppers sang all night long. Indeed there is a beauty in a tropical night, in the depth of the dark blue sky, the lambent purity of the stars, and the resplendent clearness of the moon, that spreads over the rich landscape and the balmy groves, a charm more touching than the splendour of the day.

In the sweet smell of the woods, and the odour of the flowers, which loaded every breeze, Columbus fancied he perceived the fragrance of oriental spices ; and along the shores he found shells of the kind of oyster which produces pearls. From the grass growing to the very edge of the water, he inferred the peacefulness of the ocean which bathes these islands, never lashing the shore with angry surges. Ever since his arrival among these Antilles, he had experienced nothing but soft and gentle weather, and he concluded that a perpetual serenity reigned over these happy seas. He was little suspicious of the occasional bursts of fury to which they are liable. Charlevoix, speaking from actual observation,

remarks, “ The sea of those islands is commonly more tranquil than ours ; but, like certain people who are excited with difficulty, and whose transports of passion are as violent as they are rare, so when this sea becomes irritated, it is terrible. It breaks all bounds, overflows the country, sweeps away all things that oppose it, and leaves frightful ravages behind, to mark the extent of its inundations. It is after these tempests, known by the name of hurricanes, that the shores are found covered with marine shells, which greatly surpass in lustre and beauty those of the European seas*.” It is a singular fact, however, that the hurricanes, which almost annually devastate the Bahamas, and other islands in the immediate vicinity of Cuba, have been seldom known to extend their influence to this favoured land. It would seem as if the very elements were charmed into gentleness as they approached it.

In a kind of riot of the imagination, Columbus finds at every step something to corroborate the information he had received, or fancied he had

* Charlevoix, Hist. St. Domingo, l. i., p. 20. Paris, 1730.

received, from the natives. He had conclusive proofs, as he thought, that Cuba possessed mines of gold, and groves of spices, and that the crystal waters of its shores abounded with pearls. He no longer doubted that it was the island of Cipango, and weighing anchor, coasted along westward, in which direction, according to the signs of his interpreters, the magnificent city of its king was situated. In the course of his voyage, he landed occasionally, and visited several villages; particularly one on the banks of a large river, to which he gave the name of Rio de Mares*. The houses were neatly built of branches of palm-trees in the shape of pavilions; not laid out in regular streets, but scattered here and there, among the groves, and under the shade of broad spreading trees, like tents in a camp; as is still the case in many of the Spanish settlements, and in the villages in the interior of Cuba. The inhabitants fled to the mountains, or hid themselves in the woods. Columbus carefully noted the architecture and furniture of

* Now called Savanah la Mar.

their dwellings. The houses were better built than those he had hitherto seen, and were kept extremely clean. He found in them rude statues, and wooden masks, carved with considerable ingenuity. All these were indications of more art and civilization than he had observed in the smaller islands, and he supposed they would go on increasing as he approached terra firma. Finding in all the cabins implements for fishing, he concluded that these coasts were inhabited merely by fishermen, who carried their fish to the cities in the interior. He thought also he had found the sculls of cows, which proved that there were cattle in the island ; though these are supposed to have been sculls of the manati or sea-calf found on this coast.

After standing to the north-west for some distance, Columbus came in sight of a great headland, to which, from the groves with which it was covered, he gave the name of the Cape of Palms, and which forms the eastern entrance to what is now known as Laguna de Moron. Here three Indians, natives of the island of Guanahani, who

were on board of the Pinta, informed the commander, Martin Alonso Pinzon, that behind this cape there was a river, from whence it was but four days' journey to Cubanacan, a place abounding in gold. By this they designated a province situated in the centre of Cuba; *nakan*, in their language, signifying the midst. Pinzon, however, had studied intently the map of Toscanelli, and had imbibed from Columbus all his ideas respecting the coast of Asia. He concluded, therefore, that the Indians were talking of Cublay khan, the Tartar sovereign, and of certain parts of his dominions described by Marco Polo*. He thought he understood from them that Cuba was not an island, but terra firma, extending a vast distance to the north, and that the king who reigned in this vicinity was at war with the great khan.

This tissue of errors and misconceptions, he immediately communicated to Columbus. It put an end to the delusion in which the admiral had hitherto indulged, that this was the island of Cipango; but it substituted another no less agree-

* Las Casas, lib. i., cap. 44, MS.

able. He concluded that he must have reached the mainland of Asia, or as he termed it, India, and if so, he could not be at any great distance from Mangi and Cathay, the ultimate destination of his voyage. The prince in question, who reigned over this neighbouring country, must be some oriental potentate of consequence ; he resolved, therefore, to seek the river beyond the Cape of Palms, and despatch a present to the monarch, with one of the letters of recommendation from the Castilian sovereigns ; and after visiting his dominions, he would proceed to the capital of Cathay, the residence of the grand khan.

Every attempt to reach the river in question, however, proved ineffectual. Cape stretched beyond cape ; there was no good anchorage ; the wind became contrary, and the appearance of the heavens threatening rough weather, he put back to a river where he had anchored a day or two before, and to which he had given the name of Rio de los Mares.

On the 1st of November, at sunrise, he sent

the boats on shore to visit several houses, but the inhabitants fled to the woods. Columbus supposed that they must have a dread of his armament, thinking it one of the scouring expeditions sent by the grand khan to make prisoners and slaves. He sent the boat on shore again in the afternoon, with an Indian interpreter on board, who was instructed to assure the people of the peaceable and beneficent intentions of the Spaniards, and that they had no connexion with the grand khan. After the Indian had proclaimed this from the boat to the savages upon the beach, part of it, no doubt, to their great perplexity, he threw himself into the water and swam to shore. He was well received by the natives, and succeeded so effectually in calming their fears, that before evening there were more than sixteen canoes about the ships, bringing cotton yarn and the other simple articles of traffic of these islanders. Columbus forbade all trading for anything but gold, that the natives might be tempted to produce the real riches of their country. They had none to offer, and were destitute

of all ornaments of the precious metals, excepting one who wore in his nose a piece of wrought silver. Columbus understood this man to say that the king lived about the distance of four days' journey in the interior; that many messengers had been despatched to give him tidings of the arrival of the strangers upon the coast; and that in less than three days' time messengers might be expected from him in return, and many merchants from the interior, to trade with the ships. It is curious to observe how ingeniously the imagination of Columbus deceived him at every step, and how he wove every thing into a uniform web of false conclusions. Poring over the map of Toscanelli, referring to the reckonings of his voyage, and musing on the misinterpreted words of the Indians, he imagined that he must be on the borders of Cathay, and about one hundred leagues from the capital of the grand khan. Anxious to arrive there, and to delay as little as possible in the territories of this inferior prince, he determined not to await the arrival of messengers and merchants, but to despatch two envoys

to seek the neighbouring monarch at his residence.

For this mission he chose two Spaniards, Rodrigo de Jerez and Luis de Torres ; the latter a converted Jew, who knew Hebrew and Chaldaic, and even something of Arabic, one or other of which languages Columbus supposed might be known to this oriental prince. Two Indians were sent with them as guides, one a native of Guanahani, and the other an inhabitant of the hamlet on the bank of the river. The ambassadors were furnished with strings of beads, and other trinkets for their travelling expenses. Instructions were given them to inform the king that Columbus had been sent by the Castilian sovereigns, a bearer of letters and a present, which he was to deliver personally, for the purpose of establishing an amicable intercourse between the powers. They were likewise instructed to inform themselves accurately about the situation and distances of certain provinces, ports and rivers, which the admiral specified by name from the descriptions which he had of the coast of Asia.

They were moreover provided with specimens of spices and drugs, for the purpose of ascertaining whether any precious articles of the kind abounded in the country. With these provisions and instructions, the ambassadors departed, six days being allowed them to go and return. Many, at the present day, will smile at this embassy to a naked savage chieftain in the interior of Cuba, in mistake for an Asiatic monarch; but such was the singular nature of this voyage, a continual series of golden dreams, and all interpreted by the delusive volume of Marco Polo.

CHAPTER IV.

FURTHER COASTING OF CUBA.

WHILE awaiting the return of his ambassadors, the admiral ordered the ships to be careened and repaired. He employed himself also in collecting information concerning the country. On the day after their departure, he ascended the river in boats for the distance of two leagues, until he came to fresh water. Here landing, he climbed a hill to command a prospect over the interior. His view, however, was shut in by thick and lofty forests, of the most wild but beautiful luxuriance. Among the trees were some which he considered to be the linaloës; many were odoriferous, and he doubted not possessed valuable aromatic qualities. There was a general eagerness among the voyagers to find the precious articles of commerce which grow in the favoured climes of the East; and their imaginations were continually deceived by their hopes,

For two or three days the admiral was excited by reports of cinnamon-trees, and nutmegs, and rhubarb being found; but, on examination, they all proved fallacious. He showed the natives specimens of those and various other spices and drugs which he had brought with him from Spain; and he understood from them that those articles were to be found in abundance to the south-east. He showed them gold and pearls also, whereupon several old Indians informed him that there was a country where the natives wore ornaments of them round the neck, arms, and ankles. They repeatedly mentioned the word Bohio, which Columbus supposed to be the name of the place in question, and that it was some rich district or island. They mingled, however, great extravagancies with their imperfect accounts, describing nations at a distance who had but one eye; others who had the heads of dogs, and who were cannibals—cutting the throats of their prisoners and sucking their blood *.

All these reports of gold, and pearls, and spices,

* Primer Viage de Colon., Navarrete, lxxi., p. 48.

many of which were probably fabrications to please the admiral, tended to keep up the persuasion that he was among the valuable coasts and islands of the East. On making a fire to heat the tar for careening the ships, the seamen found that the wood they burnt sent forth a powerful odour, and, on examining it, declared that it was mastic. The wood abounded in the neighbouring forests, insomuch that Columbus flattered himself a thousand quintals of this precious gum might be collected every year; and a more abundant supply procured than that furnished by Scios, and other islands of the Archipelago. In the course of their researches in the vegetable kingdom, in quest of the luxuries of commerce, they met with the potatoe, a humble root, little valued at the time, but a more precious acquisition to man than all the spices of the East.

On the 6th of November, the two ambassadors returned, and every one crowded to hear tidings of the interior of the country, and of the prince to whose capital they had been sent. After penetrating twelve leagues, they had come to a vil-

lage of fifty houses, built similarly to those of the coast, but larger ; the whole village containing at least a thousand inhabitants. They were received with great solemnity ; the natives conducted them to the best house, and placed them in what appeared to be intended for chairs of state, being wrought out of single pieces of wood, into the forms of quadrupeds. They then offered them the principle articles of their food, fruits, and vegetables. When they had complied with the laws of savage courtesy and hospitality, they seated themselves on the ground around their visitors, and waited to hear what they had to communicate.

The Israelite, Luis de Torres, found his Hebrew, Chaldaic, and Arabic, of no avail, and the Lucayen interpreter had to be the orator. He made a regular speech, after the Indian manner, in which he extolled the power, the wealth, and munificence of the white men. When he had finished, the Indians crowded round these wonderful beings, whom, as usual, they considered more than human. Some touched them, examin-

ing their skin and raiment, others kissed their hands and feet, in token of submission or adoration. In a little while the men withdrew, and were succeeded by the women, and the same ceremonies were repeated. Some of the women had a slight covering of netted cotton round the middle, but most of the inhabitants of both sexes were entirely naked. There seemed to be something like ranks and orders of society among them, and a chieftain who had some authority ; whereas in all the natives they had previously met with among the islands, a complete equality had appeared to prevail.

Such were all the traces they found at the oriental city and court which they had anticipated. There was no appearance of gold, or other precious articles, and when they shewed specimens of cinnamon, pepper, and other spices, the inhabitants told them they were not to be found in that neighbourhood, but far off to the south-west.

The envoys determined, therefore, to return to the ships. The natives would fain have induced

them to remain for several days ; but seeing them bent on departing, a great number were anxious to accompany them, imagining they were about to return to the skies. They took with them, however, only one of the principal men, with his son, who were attended by a domestic.

On their way back, they for the first time witnessed the use of a weed, which the ingenious caprice of man has since converted into an universal luxury, in defiance of the opposition of the senses. They beheld several of the natives going about with firebrands in their hands, and certain dried herbs which they rolled up in a leaf, and lighting one end, put the other in their mouths, and continued exhaling and puffing out the smoke. These rolls they called tobacco, a name since transferred to the plant of which they were made. The Spaniards were struck with astonishment at this singular indulgence, although prepared to meet with wonders.

On their return to the ships, they gave favourable accounts of the beauty and fertility of the country. They had met with many hamlets of

four or five houses, well peopled, embowered among trees, laden with unknown fruits of tempting hue and delightful flavour. Around them were fields, planted with the agi or sweet pepper, with potatoes, with maize, or Indian corn, and with a species of Lupin or Pulse. There were fields, also, of a plant, the roots whereof they made their Cassava bread. These, with the fruits of their groves, formed the principal food of the natives, who were extremely frugal and simple in their diet. There were vast quantities of cotton, some just sown, some in full growth, and some wrought into yarn, or into nets, of which they made their hammocks. Of this there was great store, both wrought and unwrought, in their houses. They had seen many birds of rare plumage, but of unknown species; many ducks, several small partridges; and, like Columbus, they had heard the song of a bird which they had mistaken for the nightingale. All that they had seen, however, betokened a primitive and simple state of society; for, with all its beauty, the country was in a wild, uncultivated state. The

wonder with which they had been regarded, shewed clearly that the people were strangers to civilized man, nor could they hear of any inland city superior to the one they had visited. The report of the envoys put an end to many splendid fancies of Columbus, about this barbaric prince and his capital. He was cruising, however, in a region of enchantment, over which his imagination exercised a magic power. As fast as one illusion passed away another succeeded ; for, during the absence of the emissaries, the Indians had informed him, by signs, of a place to the eastward, where the people collected gold along the river banks by torch-light, and afterwards wrought it into bars with hammers. In speaking of this place they again used the words Babeque and Bohio, which Columbus, as usual, supposed to be the proper names of islands or countries. The true meaning of these words has been variously explained. It is said that they were applied by the Indians to the coast of terra firma, called also by them Caritaba*. It is also said

* Muñoz, Hist. N. Mundo, c. 3.

that Bohio means a house, and was often used by the Indians to signify the populousness of an island. Hence it was frequently applied to Hispaniola, as well as the more general name of Hayti, which means highland, and occasionally Quisqueya, (*i. e.* the whole) on account of its extent.

The misapprehension of these, and other words, was a source of perpetual error to Columbus. Sometimes he confounded Babeque and Bohio together, as if signifying the same island; sometimes they were different, and existing in different quarters; and Quisqueya he supposed to mean Quisai or Quinsai, (*i. e.* the celestial city) of which, as has already been mentioned, he had received so magnificent an idea from the writings of the Venetian traveller.

The great object of Columbus was to arrive at some opulent and civilized country of the East, where he might establish a commercial relation with its sovereign, and carry home a quantity of oriental merchandise as a rich trophy of his discovery. The season was advancing; the cool

nights gave hints of approaching winter ; he resolved, therefore, not to proceed further to the north, nor to linger about uncivilized places, which, at present, he had not the means of colonising. Conceiving himself to be on the eastern coast of Asia, he determined to turn to the east-south-east, in quest of Babeque, which he trusted might prove some rich and civilized island.

Before leaving the river, to which he had given the name of Rio de Mares, he took several of the natives to carry with him to Spain, for the purpose of teaching them the language, that, in future voyages, they might serve as interpreters. He took them of both sexes, having learned from the Portuguese discoverers, that the men always were more contented on the voyage, and serviceable on their return, when accompanied by females. In his own enthusiasm, and with the religious feeling of the day, he anticipated great triumphs to the faith and glory to the crown, from the conversion of these savage nations, through the means of the natives thus instructed. He imagined that the Indians had no system of religion,

but a disposition to receive its impressions ; as they looked on with great reverence and attention at the religious ceremonies of the Spaniards, soon repeating by rote any prayer that was taught them, and making the sign of the cross with the most edifying devotion. They had an idea of a future state, but limited and confused ; it was difficult for mere savages to conceive an idea of pure spiritual existence and delight, separate from the joys of sense, or from those beautiful scenes which have been their favourite resort while living. Peter Martyr, a contemporary of Columbus, mentions the idea of the Indians on this subject : “They confess the soul to be immortal, and having put off the bodily clothing, they imagine it goeth forth to the woods and the mountains, and that it liveth there perpetually in caves ; nor do they exempt it from eating and drinking, but that it should be fed there. The answering voices heard from caves and hollows, which the Latines call echoes, they suppose to be the souls of the departed, wandering through those places *.”

* P. Martyr, decad. 8, c. 9.—M. Lock's translation, 1612.

From the natural tendency to devotion which Columbus thought he discovered among these poor people, from their gentle natures, and their ignorance of all warlike arts, he pronounces it an easy matter to make them all devout members of the church, and loyal subjects of the crown. He concludes his speculations upon the advantages to be derived from the colonization of these parts by anticipating a great trade there for gold, which must abound in the interior ; for pearls and precious stones, of which, though he had seen none, he had received frequent accounts ; for gems and spices, of which he thought he had found indubitable traces ; and for the cotton, which grew wild in vast quantities. Many of these articles, he observed, would probably find a nearer market than Spain, in the ports and cities of the great Khan, at which he had no doubt of soon arriving.*

* Primer Viage de Colon., Navarrete, f. 1.

CHAPTER V.

SEARCH AFTER THE SUPPOSED ISLAND OF
BABEQUE. DESERTION OF THE PINTA.

[1492.]

ON the 12th of November, Columbus turned his course to the east-south-east, to follow back the direction of the coast. This may be considered another critical change in his voyage, which had a great effect upon his subsequent discoveries. He had proceeded far within what is called the old channel, between Cuba and the Bahamas. In two or three days more, he would have discovered his mistake in supposing Cuba a part of terra firma : an error in which he continued to the day of his death. He might have had intimation also of the vicinity of the continent, and have stood for the coast of Florida, or have been carried thither by the gulf stream, or, continuing along Cuba where it leads to the south-west, might have struck over to the opposite coast of Yucatan,

and have realized his most sanguine anticipations in becoming the discoverer of Mexico. It was sufficient glory for Columbus, however, to have discovered the New World. Its more golden regions were reserved to give splendour to succeeding enterprises.

He now ran along the coast for two or three days without stopping to explore it. No populous towns or cities were to be seen, which, if near the sea, would have been visible from the ships. Passing by a great cape, to which he gave the name of Cape Cuba, he struck eastward, to sea, in search of Babeque, but was soon obliged to put back in consequence of a head wind and boisterous sea. He anchored, therefore, in a deep and secure harbour, to which he gave the name of Puerto del Principe, and passed a few days exploring with his boats an archipelago of small but beautiful islands in the vicinity, since known as *El jardin del Rey*, or the king's garden. The gulf studded with these islands, he named the sea of Nuestra Señora; in modern days it has been a lurking place for pirates, who have found

secure shelter and concealment among the channels and solitary harbours of this archipelago. These islands were covered with noble trees, among which the Spaniards thought they discovered mastic and aloes. Columbus supposed these, therefore, to be a part of the innumerable islands said to fringe the coast of Asia, and famed for abounding in spices. While at the Puerto del Principe, he elevated a cross in a lofty and conspicuous place adjacent to the harbour, his usual sign of having taken possession.

On the 19th, he again put to sea, in almost a calm; but the wind springing from the eastward, he stood away off to the north-north-east, and at sun-down was seven leagues distant from Puerto del Principe. Land was now descried directly east, about sixty miles distant, which from the signs of the natives he supposed to be the long-desired island of Babeque. He continued all night to the north-east. On the following day the wind continued contrary, blowing directly from the quarter to which he wished to steer. He was for some time within sight of the island

of Isabella, but forebore to touch there, lest his Indian interpreters, who were from the island of Guanahani, only eight leagues from that of Isabella*, might desert,—the poor savages keeping a wistful eye in the direction of their home. Finding the wind obstinately adverse, and the sea rough, Columbus at length put his ship about to return to Cuba, making signals to his companions to do the same. The Pinta, however, commanded by Martin Alonso Pinzon, had by this time gradually worked a considerable distance to the eastward. As he could easily rejoin the other vessels with the wind astern, Columbus repeated his signals, but still they were unattended to. Night coming on, he shortened sail, and hoisted signal lights to the mast head, thinking that Pinzon would yet join him ; but when morning dawned, the Pinta was no longer to be seen†.

The fact was, that Pinzon had received extravagant accounts from one of the Indians on

* Journal of Columbus, Navarrete Collec., t. i., p. 61.

† Las Casas, Hist. Ind., t. i., cap. 27. Hist. del Almirante, cap. 29. Journal of Columbus, Navarrete, t. i.

board of his caravel, of an island or region of great riches, to which he offered to guide him. His avarice was suddenly awakened ; his vessel being the best sailer, he could easily ply to windward, while the others had to abandon the attempt. He might be the first therefore to discover this golden region, and enrich himself with its first fruits. He had long been impatient of the domination of the admiral, thinking himself entitled to an equality from having contributed much of the funds of the expedition. He was a veteran navigator, the oracle of the maritime community of Palos, and accustomed from his wealth and standing to give the law among his nautical associates. He had ill-brooked, therefore, being obliged to sail in a subordinate capacity on board of his own ship, and several disputes had occurred between him and the admiral. The sudden temptation offered to his avarice, added to his previous discontent, had been too powerful for his sense of duty. Forgetting what was due to the admiral, as his commander, he had disregarded his signals, and keeping on to the eastward, with the

advantage of his superior sailing, had gradually separated himself from the squadron.

Columbus was exceedingly indignant at this desertion. Independent of its being a flagrant example of insubordination, he suspected some sinister design. Either Pinzon intended to arrogate a separate command, and separate advantages, or to hasten back to Spain and snatch the laurel of discovery. The heavy sailing of his vessel, however, rendered all attempt to pursue him hopeless: he continued on, therefore, to Cuba, to finish the exploring of its coast.

On the 24th of November he regained point Cuba, and anchored in a fine harbour formed by the mouth of a river, to which he gave the name of St. Catherine. It was bordered by rich meadows, the neighbouring mountains were well wooded, there were pines tall enough to make masts for the finest ships, and noble oaks. In the bed of the river they found stones veined with gold.

Columbus continued for several days coasting the residue of Cuba, extolling in rapturous terms

the magnificence, freshness, and verdure of the scenery, the purity of the rivers, and the number and commodiousness of the harbours. His description of one place, to which he gave the name of Puerto Santo, is a specimen of his vivid and artless feeling for the beauties of nature. “The amenity of this river, and the clearness of the water, through which the sand at the bottom may be seen ; the multitude of palm-trees of various forms, the highest and most beautiful that I have met with, and an infinity of other great and green trees ; the birds in rich plumage and the verdure of the fields, render this country, most serene princes, of such marvellous beauty, that it surpasses all others in charms and graces, as the day doth the night in lustre. For which reason I often say to my people, that, much as I endeavour to give a complete account of it to your Majesties, my tongue cannot express the whole truth, nor my pen describe it ; and I have been so overwhelmed at the sight of so much beauty, that I have not known how to relate it*.”

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 29.

The transparency of the water, which Columbus attributed to the purity of the rivers, is the property of the ocean in these latitudes. So clear is the sea in the neighbourhood of some of these islands, that in still weather the bottom may be seen, as in a crystal fountain, and the inhabitants dive down four or five fathoms in search of conichs, and other shell-fish, which are visible from the surface. The delicate breezes and pure waters of these islands, are among their greatest charms.

As a proof of the gigantic vegetation of these coasts, Columbus mentions the enormous size of the canoes formed from single trunks of trees. One that he saw, was capable of containing one hundred and fifty persons. Among other articles found in the Indian dwellings, was a cake of wax. Columbus took it to present to the Castilian sovereigns, "for where there is wax," said he, "there must be a thousand other good things*." It is since supposed to have been brought from Yucatan, as the inhabitants of Cuba were not accustomed to gather wax †.

* Journal of Columbus, Navarrete, t. i.

† Herrera., Hist. Ind., decad. 1.

On the 5th of December, Columbus reached the eastern end of Cuba, which he supposed to be the eastern extremity of Asia ; or, as he always termed it, India. He gave it, therefore, the name of Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. He was now greatly perplexed what course to take. He felt a desire to follow along the coast as it bent off to the south-west, which might bring him to the more civilized and opulent parts of India. On the other hand, if he took this course, he must abandon all hope of finding the island of Babeque, which the Indians now said lay to the north-east, and of which they still continued to give the most marvellous accounts. It was a state of embarrassment characteristic of this extraordinary voyage, to have a new and unknown world thus spread out to the choice of the explorer, where wonders and beauties invited him on every side ; but where, whichever way he turned, he might leave the true region of profit and delight behind.

CHAPTER VI.

DISCOVERY OF HISPANIOLA.

[1492.]

ON the 5th of December, while Columbus was steering at large beyond the eastern extremity of Cuba, undetermined what course to take, he descried land to the south-east, which gradually increased upon the view; its high mountains towering above the clear horizon, and giving evidence of an island of great extent. The Indians, on beholding it, exclaimed *Bohio*, the name by which Columbus understood them to designate some country which abounded in gold. When they saw him standing on in that direction, they showed great signs of terror, imploring him not to visit it, assuring, him by signs, that the inhabitants were fierce and cruel, that they had but one eye, and were cannibals. The wind being unfavourable, and the nights long, during which

they did not dare to make sail in these unknown seas, they were a great part of two days working up to the island.

In the transparent atmosphere of the tropics, objects are descried at a great distance, and the purity of the air and serenity of the deep blue sky, give a magical effect to the scenery. Under these advantages, the beautiful island of Haity revealed itself to the eye as they approached. Its mountains were higher and more rocky than those of the other islands ; but the rocks reared themselves from among rich forests. The mountains swept down into luxuriant plains and green savannas, while the appearance of cultivated fields, with the numerous fires at night, and the columns of smoke which rose in various parts by day, all showed it to be populous. It rose before them in all the splendour of tropical vegetation, one of the most beautiful islands in the world, and doomed to be one of the most unfortunate.

In the evening of the 6th of December, Columbus entered a harbour at the western end of the island, to which he gave the name of St. Nicholas,

by which it is called at the present day. The harbour was spacious and deep, surrounded with large trees, many of them loaded with fruit ; while a beautiful plain extended in front of the port, traversed by a fine stream of water. From the number of canoes seen in various parts, there were evidently large villages in the neighbourhood, but the natives had fled with terror at sight of the ships.

Leaving the harbour of St. Nicholas on the 7th, they coasted along the northern side of the island. It was lofty and mountainous, but with green savannas and long sweeping plains. At one place they caught a view up a rich and smiling valley that ran far into the interior, between two mountains, and appeared to be in a high state of cultivation.

For several days they were detained in a harbour which they called Port Conception ; a small river emptied into it, after winding through a delightful country. The coast abounded with fish, some of which even leapt into their boats.

They cast their nets, therefore, and caught great quantities, and among them several kinds similar to those of Spain,—the first fish they had met with resembling those of their own country. They heard, also, the notes of the bird which they mistook for the nightingale, and of several others to which they were accustomed. These, by the simple associations of idea which speak to the heart, reminded them strongly of the groves of their distant Andalusia. They fancied the features of the surrounding country resembled those of the more beautiful provinces of Spain, and, in consequence of this idea, the admiral named the island Hispaniola.

There were traces of rude cultivation in the neighbourhood of the harbour, but the natives had abandoned the coast on their arrival. They at one time saw five lurking at a distance, who escaped on being approached. Columbus, desirous of establishing some intercourse, despatched six men, well armed, into the interior. They found several cultivated fields, and traces of

roads, and places where fires had been made, but the inhabitants had fled with terror to the mountains.

Though the whole country was solitary and deserted, Columbus consoled himself with the idea, that there must be populous towns in the interior, where the people had taken refuge, and that the fires he had beheld had been signal fires, like those lighted up on the mountains in the old countries, in the times of Moorish war and sudden ravages of the sea-bords, to warn the peasantry to fly from the coast.

On the 12th of December, Columbus, with great solemnity, erected a cross on a commanding eminence, at the entrance of the harbour, in sign of having taken possession. As three sailors were rambling about the vicinity, they beheld a large number of the natives, who immediately took flight; but the sailors pursued them, and, with great difficulty, succeeded in overtaking a young and handsome female, and brought their wild beauty in triumph to the ships. She was per-

fectedly naked, which was a bad omen as to the civilization of the island, but an ornament of gold which she wore in the nose, gave hope that the precious metal was to be found there. The admiral soon soothed her terror by his kindness. He had her clothed, and made her presents of beads, brass rings, hawks' bells, and other trinkets, and sent her on shore accompanied by several of the crew, and three of the Indian interpreters. So well pleased was this simple savage with her finery, and so won by the kind treatment she had experienced, that she would gladly have remained with the Indian women whom she found on board. The party which had been sent with her returned on board late in the night, finding that her village was far distant, and fearing to venture inland. Confident of the favourable impression which the report given by the woman must produce, the admiral, on the following day, despatched nine stout-hearted, well armed men, to seek the village, accompanied by a native of Cuba as an interpreter. They found the village about four and a half

leagues to the south-east, situated in a fine valley, on the banks of a beautiful river*. It contained one thousand houses, but all deserted, for they had beheld the inhabitants flying as they approached. The interpreter was sent after them, who, with great difficulty, quieted their terrors, assuring them of the goodness of these strangers, who had descended from the skies, and went about the world making precious and beautiful presents. Thus assured, the natives ventured back to the number of two thousand. They approached the nine Spaniards with slow and trembling steps, often pausing and putting their hands upon their heads, in token of profound reverence and submission. They were a well-formed race, fairer and handsomer than the natives of the other islands†. While the Spaniards were conversing with them by means of their interpreter, they beheld another multitude approaching. These were headed by the husband of the female Indian

* This village was formerly known by the name of Gros Morne, situated on the banks of the river of "Trois Rivieres," which empties itself half a mile west of Port de Paix.—Navarrete, t.i.

† Las Casas, lib, i., cap. 53., MS.

who had been entertained on board of the ships the preceding evening. They brought her in triumph on their shoulders, and the husband was profuse in his gratitude for the kindness with which she had been treated, and the magnificent presents which had been bestowed upon her.

The Indians having now become more familiar with the Spaniards, and having, in some measure, recovered from their extreme fear, conducted them to their houses, and set before them cassava bread, fish, roots, and fruits of various kinds. Learning from the interpreter that the Spaniards were fond of parrots, they brought great numbers of them which they had domesticated, and indeed offered freely whatever they possessed; such was the frank hospitality which reigned throughout the island, where, as yet, the passion of avarice was unknown. The great river which flowed through this valley was bordered with noble forests, among which were palms, bananas, and many trees covered with fruit and flowers. The air was mild as in April; the birds sang all day long, and some were even heard in the night.

The Spaniards had not learnt as yet to account for the difference of seasons in this opposite part of the globe ; they were astonished to hear the voice of this supposed nightingale singing in the midst of December, and considered it a proof that there was no winter in this happy climate. They returned to the ships enraptured with the beauty of the country ; surpassing, as they said, even the luxuriant plains of Cordova. All that they complained of was, that they saw no signs of riches among the natives. And here it is impossible to refrain from dwelling on the picture given by the first discoverers, of the state of manners in this eventful island before the arrival of the white men. According to their accounts, the people of Hayti existed in that state of primitive and savage simplicity, which some philosophers have fondly pictured as the most enviable on earth ; surrounded by natural blessings, without even a knowledge of artificial wants. The fertile earth produced the chief part of their food almost without culture, their rivers and sea-coast abounded with fish, and they caught the

utia, the guana, and a variety of birds. This, to beings of their frugal and temperate habits, was great abundance, and what nature furnished thus spontaneously, they willingly shared with all the world. Hospitality, we are told, was with them a law of nature universally observed ; there was no need of being known to receive its succours, every house was as open to the stranger as his own *. Columbus, too, in a letter to Luis de St. Angel, observes, “ True it is that after they felt confidence, and lost their fear of us, they were so liberal with what they possessed, that it would not be believed by those who had not seen it. If any thing was asked of them, they never said no, but rather gave it cheerfully, and showed as much amity as if they gave their very hearts ; and whether the thing were of value, or of little price, they were content with whatever was given in return. * * * In all these islands it appears to me that the men are all content with one wife, but they give twenty to their chieftain or king. The women seem to work more than the

* Charlevoix. Hist. St. Doming., l. i.

men ; and I have not been able to understand whether they possess individual property ; but rather think that whatever one has all the rest share, especially in all articles of provisions *.”

One of the most pleasing descriptions of the inhabitants of this island is given by old Peter Martyr, who gathered it, as he says, from the conversations of the admiral himself. “ It is certain,” says he, “ that the land among these people is as common as the sun and water ; and that ‘ mine and thine,’ the seeds of all mischief, have no place with them. They are content with so little, that in so large a country they have rather superfluity than scarceness ; so that they seem to live in the golden world, without toil, living in open gardens ; not entrenched with dykes, divided with hedges, or defended with walls. They deal truly one with another, without laws, without books, and without judges. They take him for an evil and mischievous man, who taketh pleasure in doing hurt to another ; and albeit they delight not in superfluities, yet they

* Letter of Columbus to Luis de St. Angel, Navarrete, t. i., p. 167.

make provision for the increase of such roots whereof they make their bread, contented with such simple diet, whereby health is preserved and disease avoided *.”

Much of this picture may be overcoloured by the imagination, but it is generally confirmed by contemporary historians. They all concur in representing the life of these islanders as approaching to the golden state of poetical felicity ; living under the absolute but patriarchal and easy rule of their caciques, free from pride, with few wants, an abundant country, a happily tempered climate, and a natural disposition to careless and indolent enjoyment.

* P. Martyr, decad. 1., l. iii. Transl. of Richard Eden, 1555.

CHAPTER VII.

COASTING OF HISPANIOLA.

[1492.]

WHEN the weather became favourable, Columbus made another attempt, on the 14th of December, to find the island of Babeque, but was again baffled by adverse winds. In the course of this attempt, he visited an island lying opposite to the harbour of Conception, to which, from its abounding in turtle, he gave the name of Tortugas. The natives had fled to the rocks and forests, and alarm fires blazed along the heights, from which circumstance he inferred that they were more subject to invasion than the other islands. The country was so beautiful, that he gave to one of the valleys the name of Vallé de Paraiso, or the Vale of Paradise, and called a fine stream the Guadalquivir, after that renowned river which flows through some of the fairest provinces of

Spain*. Setting sail on the 16th of December at midnight, Columbus steered again for Hispaniola. When halfway across the gulf which separates the islands, he perceived a canoe navigated by a single Indian, and as on a former occasion, was astonished at his hardihood in venturing so far from land in so frail a bark, and at his adroitness in keeping it above water, as the wind was fresh, and there was some sea running. He ordered both him and his canoe to be taken on board; and having anchored near a village on the coast of Hispaniola, at present known as Puerto de Paz, he sent him on shore well regaled and enriched with various presents.

In the early intercourse with these people, kindness never seems to have failed in its effect. The favourable accounts given by this Indian, and by those with whom the Spaniards had communicated in their previous landings, dispelled the fears of the islanders. A friendly intercourse soon took place, and the ships were visited by a cacique of the neighbourhood. From this chief-

* Journal of Columbus, Navarrete Collec., t. i.

tain and his counsellors, Columbus had further information of the island of Babeque, which was described as lying at no great distance. No mention is afterwards made of this island, nor does it appear that Columbus made any further attempt to seek it. No such island exists in the ancient charts, and it is probable that this was one of the numerous misinterpretations of Indian words, which led Columbus and others of the first discoverers into so many fruitless researches. The people of Hispaniola appeared handsomer to Columbus than any he had yet met with, and of a gentle and peaceable disposition. Some of them had trifling ornaments of gold, which they readily gave away or exchanged for any trifle. The country was finely diversified with lofty mountains and fine valleys, which stretched away inland as far as the eye could reach. The mountains were of such easy ascent, that the highest of them might be ploughed with oxen, and the luxuriant growth of the forests manifested the fertility of the soil. The valleys were watered by numerous clear and beautiful streams; they

appeared to be cultivated in many places, and to be fitted for grain, for orchards, and pasturage.

While detained at this harbour by contrary winds, Columbus was visited by a young cacique of apparently great importance. He was borne by four men on a sort of litter, and attended by two hundred of his subjects. The admiral being at dinner when he arrived, the young chieftain ordered his followers to remain without, and entering the cabin, took his seat beside Columbus, not permitting him to rise or use any ceremony. Only two old men entered with him, who appeared to be his counsellors, and who seated themselves at his feet. If any thing were given him to eat or drink, he merely tasted it, and sent it to his followers, maintaining an air of great gravity and dignity. He spoke but little, his two counsellors watching his lips, and catching and communicating his ideas. After dinner he presented the admiral with a belt curiously wrought, and two pieces of gold. Columbus gave him a piece of cloth, several amber beads, coloured shoes, and a flask of orange-flower water ; he

shewed him Spanish coin, on which were the likenesses of the king and queen, and endeavoured to explain to him the power and grandeur of those sovereigns ; he displayed, also, the royal banners and the standard of the cross : it was all in vain to attempt to convey any clear idea by these symbols ; the cacique could not be made to believe that there was a region on the earth which produced these wonderful people and wonderful things ; he joined in the common idea that the Spaniards were more than mortal, and that the country and sovereigns they talked of must exist somewhere in the skies.

In the evening the cacique was sent on shore in the boat with great ceremony, and a salute fired in honour of him. He departed in the state in which he had come, carried on a litter, accompanied by a great concourse of his subjects ; not far behind him was his son, borne and escorted in like manner, and his brother on foot, supported by two attendants. The presents which he had received from the admiral were carried before him with great ceremony.

They procured but little gold in this place, though whatever ornaments the natives possessed they readily gave away. The region of promise still lay farther on, and one of the old counsellors of the cacique told Columbus that he would soon arrive at islands rich in the precious ore. Before leaving this place, the admiral caused a large cross to be erected in the centre of the village, and from the readiness with which the Indians assisted, and their implicit imitation of the Spaniards in their acts of devotion, he inferred that it would be an easy matter to convert them all to Christianity.

On the 19th of December they made sail before day-light, but with unfavourable wind, and on the evening of the 20th they anchored in a fine harbour, to which Columbus gave the name of St. Thomas, supposed to be what at present is called the Bay of Acùl. It was surrounded by a beautiful and well-peopled country. The inhabitants came off to the ships, some in canoes, some swimming, bringing fruits of various unknown kinds, of great fragrance and flavour. These they gave

freely with whatever else they possessed, especially their golden ornaments, which they saw were particularly coveted by the strangers. There was a remarkable frankness and generosity about these people ; they had no idea of traffic, but gave away every thing with spontaneous liberality. Columbus would not permit his people, however, to take advantage of this free disposition, but ordered that something should always be given in exchange. Several of the neighbouring caciques visited the ships, bringing presents, and inviting the Spaniards to their villages, where, on going to land, they were most hospitably entertained.

On the 22d of December a large canoe filled with natives came on a mission from a grand cacique named Guacanagari, who commanded all that part of the island. A principal servant of that chieftain came in the canoe, bringing the admiral a present of a broad belt, wrought ingeniously with coloured beads and bones, and a wooden mask, the eyes, nose, and tongue of which were of gold. He delivered also a message from the cacique, begging that the ships might come

opposite to his residence, which was on a part of the coast a little further to the eastward. The wind preventing an immediate compliance with this invitation, the admiral sent the notary of the squadron, with several of the crew, to visit the cacique. He resided in a town, situated on a river, at what they called Punta Santa, at present Point Honorata. It was the largest and best-built town they had yet seen. The cacique received them in a kind of public square, which had been swept and prepared for the occasion, and treated them with great honour, giving to each a dress of cotton. The inhabitants crowded round them, bringing provisions and refreshments of various kinds. The seamen were received into their houses as distinguished guests ; they gave them garments of cotton, and whatever else appeared to have value in their eyes, asking nothing in return, but if any thing were given, appearing to treasure it up as a sacred relic.

The cacique would have detained them all night, but their orders obliged them to return. On parting with them, he gave them presents of

parrots and of pieces of gold for the admiral, and they were attended to their boats by a crowd of the natives, carrying the presents for them, and vying with each other in rendering them service.

During their absence, the admiral had been visited by a great number of canoes and several inferior caciques ; all assured him that the island abounded with wealth ; they talked, especially, of a region in the interior, further to the East, which they called Cibao, the cacique of which, as far as they could be understood, had banners of wrought gold. Columbus, deceiving himself as usual, fancied that this name Cibao must be a corruption of Cipango, and that this chieftain with golden banners must be identical with the magnificent prince of that island, mentioned by Marco Polo*.

* Journal of Columbus, Navarrete Collec., t. i. Hist. del Almirante, c. 31, 32. Herrera, d. 1, lib. i., c. 15, 16.

CHAPTER VIII.

SHIPWRECK.

[1492.]

ON the morning of the 24th of December, Columbus set sail from Port Conception before sun-rise, and steered to the eastward, with an intention of anchoring at the harbour of the cacique Guanagari. The wind was from the land, but so light as scarcely to fill the sails, and the ships made but little progress. At eleven o'clock at night, being Christmas eve, they were within a league or a league and a half of the residence of the cacique, and Columbus, who had hitherto kept watch, finding the sea calm and smooth, and the ship almost motionless, retired to take a little rest, not having slept the preceding night. He was, in general, extremely wakeful on his coasting voyages, passing whole nights upon deck in all weathers; never trusting to the watchfulness of others, where there was any difficulty or danger

to be provided against. In the present instance he felt perfectly secure ; not merely on account of the profound calm, but because the boats on the preceding day, in their visit to the cacique, had reconnoitred the coast, and had reported that there were neither rocks nor shoals in their course.

Never was the importance of the eye of a commander more clearly illustrated. No sooner had the vigilant admiral retired, than the steersman gave the helm in charge to one of the ship-boys, and went to sleep. This was in direct violation of one of the invariable orders of the admiral, that the helm should never be intrusted to the boys. The rest of the mariners who had the watch, took like advantage of the absence of Columbus, and in a little while the whole crew was buried in sleep. While this security reigned over the ship, the treacherous currents, which run swiftly along this coast, carried her quickly, but with force, upon a sand bank. The heedless boy had not noticed the breakers, although they made a roaring that might have been heard a

league. No sooner, however, did he feel the rudder strike, and hear the tumult of the rushing sea, than he began to cry for aid. Columbus, whose careful thoughts never permitted him to sleep profoundly, was the first to take the alarm and mount the deck. The master of the ship, whose duty it was to have been on watch, next made his appearance, followed by others of the crew, half awake, and unconscious of the peril of their situation. The admiral ordered them to take the boat and carry out an anchor astern, that they might endeavour to warp the vessel off. The master and the sailors sprang into the boat ; but they were confused and seized with a panic, as men are apt to be when suddenly awakened by an alarm. Instead of obeying the commands of Columbus, they rowed off to the other caravel, which was about half a league to windward ; while he, supposing that they were carrying out the anchor, trusted soon to get the vessel again into deep water.

When the boat arrived at the caravel, and made known the perilous state in which they had

left their vessel, they were reproached with their pusillanimous desertion, and refused admission. The commander and several of his crew, manning their boat, hastened to the assistance of the admiral, and were followed by the recreant master and his companions, covered with shame and confusion.

They arrived too late to save the ship, for the violent current had set her more and more upon the bank. The admiral seeing that his boat had deserted him, that the ship had swung across the stream, and that the water was continually gaining upon her, had ordered the mast to be cut away, in the hope of lightening her sufficiently to float her off. Every effort was in vain. The keel was firmly bedded in the sand; the shock had opened several seams; while the swell of the breakers striking her broadside, left her each moment more and more aground, until she fell over on one side. Fortunately the weather continued calm, otherwise the ship must have gone to pieces, and the whole crew might have perished amidst the currents and breakers.

The admiral and her men took refuge on board the caravel. Diego de Arana, chief judge of the armament, and Pedro Gutierrez, the king's butler, were immediately sent on shore as envoys to the cacique Guacanagari, to inform him of the intended visit of the admiral, and of his disastrous shipwreck. In the mean time, as a light wind had sprung up from shore, and the admiral was ignorant of his situation, and of the rocks and banks that might be lurking around him, he lay to until night.

The habitation of the cacique was about a league and a-half from the wreck. When Guacanagari heard of the misfortune of his guest, he manifested the utmost affliction, and even shed tears. He immediately sent all his people, with all the canoes, large and small, that could be mustered ; and so active were they in their assistance, that in a little while the vessel was unloaded. The cacique himself, and his brothers and relations, rendered all the aid in their power, both on sea and land ; keeping vigilant guard that every thing should be conducted with order, and

the property rescued from the wreck be preserved with inviolable fidelity. From time to time he sent some one of his family, or some principal person of his attendants, to condole with the admiral, and to entreat him not to be distressed, for that every thing he possessed should be at his disposal.

Never, in civilized country, were the vaunted rites of hospitality more scrupulously observed, than by this uncultured savage. All the effects landed from the ships were deposited near his dwelling ; and an armed guard surrounded them all night, until houses could be prepared in which to store them. There seemed, however, even among the common people, no disposition to take advantage of the misfortune of the stranger. Although they beheld, what must in their eyes have been inestimable treasures, cast, as it were, upon their shores, and open to depredation, yet there was not the least attempt to pilfer, nor, in transporting the effects from the ships, had they appropriated the most trifling article. On the contrary, a general sympathy was visible in their

countenances and actions ; and to have witnessed their concern, one would have supposed the misfortune had happened to themselves *.

“ So loving, so tractable, so peaceable are these people,” says Columbus in his journal, “ that I swear to your Majesties, there is not in the world a better nation, nor a better land. They love their neighbours as themselves ; and their discourse is ever sweet and gentle, and accompanied with a smile ; and though it is true that they are naked, yet their manners are decorous and praiseworthy †.”

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 32. Las Casas, lib. i., c. 9.

† Hist. del Almirante.

CHAPTER IX.

TRANSACTIONS WITH THE NATIVES.

[1492.]

ON the 26th of December, Guacanagari came on board of the caravel Niña, to visit the admiral ; and observing him to be very much dejected, the compassionate heart of the cacique was so much moved, that he shed tears. He repeated the message which he had sent, entreating Columbus not to be cast down by his misfortune, and offering every thing he possessed, that might render him aid or consolation. He had already given three houses to shelter the Spaniards, and to receive the effects landed from the wreck, and he offered to furnish more if necessary.

While they were conversing, a canoe arrived from another part of the island, bringing pieces of gold to be exchanged for hawks' bells. There was nothing upon which the natives set so much

value as upon these toys. The Indians were extravagantly fond of the dance, which they sometimes performed to the cadence of certain songs, accompanied by the sound of a kind of drum, made from the trunk of a tree, and the rattling of hollow bits of wood ; but when they hung the hawks' bells about their persons, and heard the clear musical sound responding to the movements of the dance, nothing could exceed their wild delight.

The sailors who came from the shore, informed the admiral that considerable quantities of gold had been brought to barter, and large pieces were eagerly given for the merest trifle. This information had a cheering effect upon Columbus. The attentive cacique, perceiving the lighting up of his countenance, inquired into what the sailors had communicated. When he learnt its purport, and found that the admiral was extremely desirous of procuring gold, he assured him by signs, that there was a place not far off, among the mountains, where it abounded to such a degree as to be held in little value. He promised to procure

him from thence as much as he desired. The place to which he alluded, and which he called Cibao, was in fact a mountainous region which the Spaniards afterwards found to contain valuable mines ; but Columbus still confounded the name with that of Cipango *.

Guacanagari dined on board of the caravel with the admiral, after which he invited him on shore to visit his residence. Here he had prepared a collection, as choice and abundant as his simple means afforded, consisting of utias, or coney-s, fish, roots, and the various fruits with which the island abounded. The generous cacique did everything in his power to honour his guest, and cheer him under his misfortune, showing a warmth of sympathy, yet delicacy of attention, which could not have been expected from his savage state. Indeed there was a degree of innate dignity and refinement displayed in his manners, that often surprised the Spaniards. He was remarkably nice and decorous in his mode of eating, which was slow and with moderation, washing his hands

* Primer Viage de Colon., Navarrete, t. i. p. 114.

when he had finished, and rubbing them with sweet and odoriferous herbs, which Columbus supposed was done to preserve their delicacy and softness. He was served with great deference by his subjects, and conducted himself towards them with a gracious and prince-like majesty. His whole deportment, in the enthusiastic eyes of Columbus, betokened the inborn grace and dignity of lofty lineage*.

In fact, the sovereignty among the people of this island was hereditary, and they had a simple but sagacious mode of maintaining, in some degree, the verity of descent. On the death of a cacique, without children, his authority passed to those of his sisters, in preference to those of his brothers, being considered most likely to be of his blood; for they observed, that a brother's reputed children may by accident have no consanguinity with their uncle; but those of his sister must certainly be the children of their mother. The form of government was completely despotic;

* Las Casas, l. i., c. 70., MS. Primer Viage de Colon., Navarrete, lxxi., p. 114.

the cæciques had entire control over the lives, the property, and even over the religion of their subjects. They had few laws, and ruled according to their judgment and their will ; but they ruled mildly, and were implicitly and cheerfully obeyed. Throughout the course of the disastrous history of these islanders, after their discovery by the Europeans, there are continual proofs of their affectionate and devoted fidelity to their caciques.

After the collation, Guacanagari conducted Columbus to the beautiful groves which surrounded his residence. They were attended by upwards of a thousand of the natives, all perfectly naked. Under the shade of their groves, the natives performed several of their national games and dances, which Guacanagari had ordered, to amuse the melancholy of his guest.

When the Indians had finished their games, Columbus gave them an entertainment in return, calculated at the same time to impress them with a formidable idea of the military power of the Spaniards. He sent on board the caravel for a Moorish bow and a quiver of arrows, and a Cas-

tilian who had served in the wars of Granada, and was skilful in the use of them. When the cacique beheld the accuracy with which this man used his weapons, he was greatly surprised, being himself of an unwarlike character, and little accustomed to the use of arms. He told the admiral that the Caribs, who often made descents upon his territory, and carried off his subjects, were likewise armed with bows and arrows. Columbus assured him of the protection of the Castilian monarchs, who would destroy the Caribs, for he let him know that he had weapons far more tremendous, against which there was no defence. In proof of this, he ordered a Lombard or heavy cannon, and an arquebus to be discharged. At the sound of these weapons, the Indians fell to the ground as though they had been struck by a thunderbolt; and when they saw the effect of the ball, rending and shivering the trees like a stroke of lightning, they were filled with dismay. On being told, however, that the Spaniards would defend them with these arms, against the

invasions of their dreaded enemies the Caribs, their alarm was changed into confident exultation, for they considered themselves under the protection of the sons of heaven, who had come from the skies armed with thunder and lightning.

The cacique now presented Columbus with several of his national jewels, a mask carved of wood, with the eyes, ears, and various other parts of gold ; he hung plates of the same metal round his neck, and placed a kind of golden coronet upon his head. He displayed also the natural munificence of his disposition, by dispensing various presents among the followers of the admiral ; acquitting himself in all things, in his simple and savage state, in a manner that would have done honour to an accomplished prince in civilized life.

Whatever trifles Columbus gave in return, were regarded with reverence as celestial gifts. The Indians, in admiring the articles of European manufacture, continually repeated the word *turey*, which in their language signifies heaven. They pretended to distinguish the different qua-

lities of gold by the smell ; in the same way, when any article of tin, of silver, or other white metal was given them, to which they were unaccustomed, they smelt it and declared it “turey” of excellent quality. Every thing, in fact, from the hands of the Spaniards was precious in their eyes ; a rusty piece of iron, an end of a strap, a head of a nail, every thing had an occult and supernatural value and smell of turey. Hawks’ bells, however, were by them sought with a mania only equalled by that of the Spaniards for gold. They could not contain their ecstacies at the sound, dancing and playing a thousand antics. On one occasion an Indian gave half a handful of gold dust in exchange for one of these toys, and no sooner was he in possession of it, than he bounded away to the woods, looking often behind him, and fearful that the Spaniards would repent of having parted so cheaply with such an inestimable jewel*.

The extreme kindness of the cacique, the gentleness of his people, the quantities of gold which

* Las Casas, l. i., c. 70. MS.

were daily brought to be exchanged for the veriest trifles, and the information continually received of sources of wealth in the bosom of this beautiful island, all contributed to console the admiral for the misfortune he had suffered.

The shipwrecked crew also, living on shore, and mingling freely with the natives, became fascinated with their easy and idle mode of life. Exempted by their simplicity from the painful cares and toils which civilized man inflicts upon himself by his many artificial wants, the existence of these islanders seemed to the Spaniards like a pleasant dream. They disquieted themselves about nothing. A few fields, cultivated almost without labour, furnished the roots and vegetables which formed a great part of their diet. Their rivers and coasts abounded with fish; their trees were laden with fruits of golden or blushing hue, and heightened by a tropical sun to delicious flavour and fragrance. Softened by the indulgence of nature, a great part of their day was passed in indolent repose, in that luxury of sensation inspired by a serene sky and a volup-

tuous climate ; and in the evenings they danced in their fragrant groves, to their national songs, or the rude sound of their sylvan drums.

Such was the indolent and holyday life of these simple people ; which, if it had not the great scope of enjoyment, nor the high-seasoned poignancy of pleasure which attends civilization, was certainly destitute of most of its artificial miseries. The venerable Las Casas, speaking of their perfect nakedness, observes, it seemed almost as if they were existing in the state of primeval innocence of our first parents, before their fall brought sin into the world. He might have added, that they seemed exempt likewise from the penalty inflicted on the children of Adam, that they should eat their bread by the sweat of their brow.

When the Spanish mariners looked back upon their toilsome and painful life, and reflected on the cares and hardships that must still be their lot if they returned to Europe, it is no wonder that they regarded with a wistful eye the easy and idle existence of these Indians. Wherever

they went they met with caressing hospitality. The men were simple, frank, and cordial ; the women loving and compliant, and prompt to form those connexions which anchor the most wandering heart. They saw gold glittering around them, to be had without labour, and every enjoyment to be procured without cost. Captivated by these advantages, many of the seamen surrounded the admiral ; they represented the difficulties and sufferings which they must encounter on a return voyage where so many would be crowded in a small caravel, and they entreated permission to remain in the island*.

* Primer Viage de Colon, Navarrete, lxxi., p. 116.

CHAPTER X.

BUILDING OF THE FORTRESS OF LA NAVIDAD.

[1492.]

THE solicitude expressed by many of his people to be left behind, added to the friendly and pacific character of the natives, now suggested to Columbus the idea of forming the germ of a future colony. The wreck of the caravel would afford abundant materials to construct a fortress, which might be defended by her guns, and supplied with her ammunition ; and he could spare provisions enough to maintain a small garrison for a year. The people who thus remained in the island could explore it, and make themselves acquainted with its mines, and other sources of wealth ; they might, at the same time, procure by traffic a large quantity of gold from the natives ; they could learn their language, and accustom themselves to their habits and manners, so as to

be of great use in future intercourse. In the mean time, the admiral would return to Spain, report the success of his enterprise, and bring out reinforcements.

No sooner did this idea break upon the mind of Columbus, than he set about accomplishing it with his accustomed promptness and celerity. The wreck was broken up and brought piece-meal to shore, and a site chosen, and preparations made for the erection of a tower. When Guacanagari was informed of the intentions of the admiral to leave a part of his men for the defence of the island from the Caribs, while he returned to his country for more, he was greatly overjoyed. His subjects manifested equal delight at the idea of retaining those wonderful people among them; and at the prospect of the future arrival of the admiral, with ships freighted with hawks' bells and other precious articles. They eagerly lent their assistance in building the fortress—little dreaming that they were assisting to place on their necks the galling yoke of perpetual and toilsome slavery.

The preparations for the fortress were scarcely commenced, when a report was brought by certain Indians that the caravel Pinta had anchored in a river at the eastern end of the island. Columbus immediately procured a canoe from Guanagari, navigated by several Indians, in which he sent a Spaniard, with a letter to Pinzon, making no complaints of his desertion, but urging him to join company immediately.

After three days' absence the canoe returned, having coasted the island for twenty leagues, without having seen or heard any thing of the Pinta; and though the admiral immediately afterwards had further reports of her being to the eastward, he gave them no credit.

The desertion of this vessel was a source of great anxiety to Columbus, and altered all his plans. Should Pinzon return to Spain before him, he would doubtless seek to excuse his conduct by injurious misrepresentations, detrimental to his future expeditions. He might even try to forestall him with the public, and bear off the glory of the discovery. Should the Pinta be

lost, the situation of Columbus was still more critical. But one ship of the three would then be surviving, and that one an indifferent sailer. On the precarious return of that crazy bark, across an immense expanse of ocean, depended the ultimate success of his expedition. Should that one likewise perish, every record of his great discovery would be swallowed up with it; the obscurity of his fate would perhaps deter all future enterprise, and the New World would remain, as heretofore, unknown. He durst not risk such an event by prolonging his voyage, and exploring those magnificent regions which seemed to be inviting him on every hand. He determined, therefore, to lose no time in returning direct to Spain.

While the fortress was building, the admiral continued to receive every day new proofs of the amity and kindness of Guacanagari. Whenever he went on shore, to superintend the works, he was entertained in the most hospitable manner by that chieftain. He had the largest house in the place prepared for his reception, strewed or

carpeted with palm leaves, and furnished with low stools, of a black and shining wood that looked like jet. When he received the admiral, it was always in a style of princely generosity, hanging around his neck some jewel of gold, or making him some present of similar value.

On one occasion, he came to meet him on his landing, attended by five tributary caciques, each carrying a coronet of gold; they conducted him with great deference, to the house already mentioned, where, seating him in one of the chairs, Guacanagari took off his own coronet of gold and placed it upon his head: Columbus in return took from his neck a collar of fine-coloured beads, which he put round that of the cacique; he invested him in a mantle of fine cloth, which he wore, gave him a pair of coloured boots, and put on his finger a large silver ring, upon which metal the Indians set a great value, it not being found in their island. Such were the acts of kindness and amity continually interchanged between Columbus and this warm-hearted, open-handed cacique.

The latter, also, exerted himself to the utmost to procure a great quantity of gold for the admiral before his departure. The supplies thus furnished, and the vague accounts collected through the medium of signs and imperfect interpretations, filled the mind of Columbus with magnificent ideas of the wealth which must exist in the interior of this island. The names of caciques, mountains and provinces, were confused together in his imagination, and supposed to mean various places where great treasure was to be found ; above all the name of Cibao continually occurred, the golden region among the mountains, from whence the natives procured most of the ore for their ornaments. In the pimento or red pepper which abounded in the island, Columbus fancied he found a trace of oriental spices, and he thought he had met with specimens of rhubarb.

Passing, with his usual buoyancy of spirit, from a state of doubt and anxiety to one of sanguine anticipation, he now considered his shipwreck as one of those providential events myste-

riously ordained by heaven to work out the success of his enterprise. Without this seeming disaster, he should never have remained to find out the secret wealth of the island, but should merely have touched at various parts of its coast, and have passed on. As a proof that the particular hand of Providence was exerted in it, he cites the circumstance of his having been wrecked in a perfect calm, without wind or wave ; and the desertion of the pilot and mariners, when sent to carry out an anchor astern ; for, had they performed his orders, the vessel would have been hauled off, they would have pursued their voyage, and the treasures of the island would have remained a secret to them. But now he looked forward to glorious fruits to be reaped from this seeming evil, “ for he hoped,” he said, “ that when he returned from Spain, he should find a ton of gold collected in traffic by those whom he had left behind, and that they had discovered mines and spices in such quantities, that the sovereigns, before three years, would be able to undertake a crusade for the deliverance of the holy

sepulchre. For so I protested to your highnesses," he adds, "that all the gain of this my enterprise should be spent in the conquest of Jerusalem, and your highnesses smiled, and said that it pleased you, and that without this you were well disposed to the undertaking *."

Such was the visionary, yet generous, enthusiasm of Columbus, the moment that prospects of vast wealth broke upon his mind. What in some spirits would have awakened a grasping and sordid avidity to accumulate, immediately filled his imagination with plans of magnificent expenditure. But how vain are our attempts to interpret the inscrutable decrees of Providence. The shipwreck, which Columbus considered an act of divine favour, to reveal to him the secrets of the land, shackled and limited all his after discoveries. It linked his fortunes, for the remainder of his life, to this island, which was doomed to be to him a source of cares and troubles, to involve him in a thousand perplexities, and to becloud his declining years with humiliation and disappointment.

* *Primer Viage de Colon.*, Navarrete, lxxi., p. 117.

CHAPTER XI.

REGULATION OF THE FORTRESS OF LA NAVIDAD. DEPARTURE OF COLUMBUS FOR SPAIN.

So great was the activity of the Spaniards in the construction of their fortress, and so ample the assistance rendered by the natives, that in ten days it was sufficiently complete for service. A large vault had been made, over which was erected a strong wooden tower, and the whole was surrounded by a wide ditch. It was stored with all the ammunition that had been saved from the wreck, or that could be spared from the caravel; and, the guns being mounted, the whole had a formidable aspect, sufficient to overawe and repulse this naked and unwarlike people. Indeed Columbus was of opinion that but little force was necessary to subjugate the whole island. He considered a fortress, and the restrictions of a garrison, more requisite to keep the Spaniards

themselves in order, and to prevent their wandering about, and committing acts of licentiousness among the natives.

The fortress being finished, he gave to it, as well as to the adjacent village and the harbour, the name of La Navidad, or the Nativity, in memorial of their having escaped from the shipwreck on Christmas-day. There were many volunteers to remain on the island, from whom he selected thirty-nine of the most able and exemplary. The command of the whole was given to Diego de Arana, a native of Cordova, and notary and alguazil to the armament, who was to retain all the powers which had been vested in him by the catholic sovereigns. In case of his death, he was to be succeeded by Pedro Gutierrez, and, he dying, by Rodrigo de Escobedo. There were also among the number, a physician, a ship-carpenter, a caulkier, a cooper, a tailor, and a gunner, all expert at their several callings. The boat of the wreck was left with them, to be used in fishing, a variety of seeds to sow, and a large quantity of articles used in Indian traffic, that they

might procure as much gold as possible against the admiral's return *.

As the time drew nigh for his departure, Columbus assembled the men who were to remain in the island, and addressed them in the most earnest and emphatic language. He charged them, in the name of the sovereigns, to be obedient to the officer to whom he had intrusted the command. That they should maintain the utmost respect and reverence for the cacique Guacanagaci and his chieftains, recollecting how deeply they were indebted to his goodness, and how important a continuance of it was to their welfare. That they should be circumspect in their intercourse with the natives, treating them always with gentleness and justice, avoiding all acts of violence, and all disputes ; and, above all, being discreet in their conduct towards the Indian women, the frequent source of troubles and disasters in the intercourse with savage nations. He warned them, moreover, not to scatter themselves asunder, but to keep together, as they derived safety from their united

* Primer Viage de Colon., Navarrete, lxxi.. Hist. del Almirante, c. 33.

number ; and that they should not stray beyond the friendly territory of Guacanagari. He enjoined it upon Arana, and the other persons in command, to do their utmost to acquire a knowledge of the productions and mines of the island, to procure gold and spices, and to explore the coast in search of a better situation for a settlement, the present harbour being inconvenient and dangerous, on account of the rocks and shoals which beset its entrance.

On the 2d of January, 1493, Columbus landed to take a farewell of the generous cacique and his chieftains, intending the next day to set sail. He gave them all a parting feast at the house which had been devoted to his use, and commended to their kindness the men who were to remain, especially Diego de Arana, Pedro Gutierrez, and Rodrigo de Escobedo, his lieutenants, assuring the cacique that, when he returned from Castile, he would bring abundance of jewels more precious than anything he or his people had yet seen. The worthy Guacanagari showed great concern at the idea of his departure, and assured him that, as to those

who remained, he should furnish them with provisions, and render them every service in his power.

Once more to impress the Indians with an idea of the warlike prowess of the white men, Columbus had skirmishes and mock-fights performed by his crews. In these they made use of their various arms and weapons ; their swords, bucklers, lances, cross-bows, arquebuses and cannon. The Indians were astonished at the keenness of their swords, and at the deadly power of the cross-bows and arquebuses ; but when the heavy bombards were discharged from the fortress, wrapping it in wreaths of smoke, shaking the forests with their thunder, and shivering the trees with the balls of stone, which in those times were used in artillery, there was the deepest awe mingled with their admiration. Conceiving that these tremendous powers were all to be employed for their protection, they rejoiced while they trembled ; since no Carib would now dare to invade the tranquillity of their island, and carry them into captivity*.

* Primer Viage de Colon., Navarrete, lxxi., p. 121.

When the festivities of the day were over, Columbus embraced the cacique and his principal chieftains, and took a final leave of them. Guanacanagari was greatly affected, and shed tears ; for while he had been awed by the dignified demeanour of the admiral, and the idea of his super-human nature, he had been completely won by the benignity of his manners. Indeed, the parting scene was sorrowful on all sides. The arrival of the ships had been an event of wonder and excitement to the islanders, who had as yet known nothing but the good qualities of their guests, and had been enriched by their celestial gifts ; while the rude seamen had been flattered by the blind deference paid them, and captivated by the kindness and unlimited indulgence with which they had been treated.

The sorest parting was between the Spaniards who embarked and those who remained behind ; for there is a strong sympathy arising from a companionship in perils and adventures, which binds the hearts of men together. The little garrison, however, evinced a cheerful spirit and stout

resolution. They looked forward with bright anticipations to the day when the admiral should return from Spain with large reinforcements, and they promised to give him a good account of all things in the island. The caravel was detained one day longer by the absence of some of the Indians whom they were to take to Spain. At length the signal-gun was fired ; they gave a parting cheer to the handful of comrades thus left in the wilderness of an unknown world, who echoed their cheering as they gazed wistfully after them from the beach, but who were destined never to welcome their return.

BOOK V.

CHAPTER I.

COASTING TOWARDS THE EASTERN END OF HIS-
PANIOLA. MEETING WITH PINZON. AFFAIR
WITH THE NATIVES AT THE GULF
OF SEMANA.

[1493.]

It was on the 4th of January that Columbus set sail from La Navidad on his return to Spain. The wind being light, it was necessary to tow the caravel out of the harbour, and clear of the reefs which environed it. They then stood eastward, towards a lofty promontory with trees, but covered with grass, and shaped like a tent, having at a distance the appearance of a towering island, being connected with Hispaniola by a low neck of land. To this promontory, Columbus gave the name of Monte Christi, by which it is still known. The country in the immediate neighbourhood was

level, but further inland rose a high range of mountains, well wooded, with broad fruitful valleys between them, watered by abundant streams. The wind being contrary, they were detained for two days in a large bay to the west of the promontory. On the 6th, they again made sail with a land breeze, and, weathering the cape, advanced ten leagues, when the wind again turned to blow freshly from the east. At this time, a sailor stationed at the mast-head to look out for rocks, cried out that he beheld the Pinta at a distance. Every one was animated at the intelligence, for it was a joyful event once more to meet with their companion in these lonely seas. The Pinta came sweeping towards them directly before the wind, with flowing canvass, and the admiral seeing that it was in vain to contend with the adverse wind, and that there was no safe anchorage in the neighbourhood, put back to the bay west of Monte Christi, followed by the other caravel. At their first interview, Martin Alonzo Pinzon endeavoured to account to the admiral for his temporary desertion, pretending that it was invo-

luntary, and offering various weak and unsatisfactory excuses. Columbus restrained his indignation, and tacitly admitted them. Pinzon had a powerful party in the armament; most of the mariners were his townsmen, several of them his relations, and one of the commanders was his brother; whereas Columbus was a stranger among them, and, what was worse, a foreigner. Pinzon had ungenerously presumed upon these circumstances several times in the course of the voyage, arrogating to himself undue importance, and treating the admiral with disrespect. Unwilling to provoke any altercations which might disturb the remainder of the voyage, Columbus listened passively, but incredulously, to the excuses of Pinzon, convinced that he had wilfully parted from him, for selfish purposes. Various particulars, gathered partly from his own story, and partly from that of his companions, confirmed this opinion. It was evident he had been actuated by a sudden impulse of avarice. On parting with the other caravel, he had steered eastward in search of an island of imaginary wealth,

described by the Indians on board of his vessel. Having wasted some time among a cluster of small islands, supposed to have been the Caicos, he had at length been guided by the Indians to Hispaniola, where he had been for three weeks, trading in various places with the natives ; especially in a river about fifteen leagues east of the harbour of Nativity. He had collected a large quantity of gold, one half of which he retained as captain, the rest he divided among his men, to secure their fidelity and secrecy. After thus making considerable booty, he had left the river, carrying off four Indian men and two girls whom he had taken by force, with the intention of selling them in Spain. He pretended to have been entirely ignorant that Columbus was in a neighbouring part of the island, and declared that he was in search of him when they met off Monte Christi *.

Being thus rejoined by the other caravel, Columbus would have felt encouraged to explore the coasts of this fancied island of Cipango ; in

* Hist. del Almirante, c. 34.

which case he had no doubt of being able to load his ships with treasures : but he had lost all confidence in the Pinzons ; he found himself subject to frequent arrogance and contradiction from them, and had no security that Martin Alonzo might not again desert him on the least temptation. He determined, therefore, to continue his route to Spain, and to leave the exploring of these golden regions for a subsequent expedition.

The boats were accordingly despatched to a large river which empties itself into the bay, to take in a supply of wood and water for the voyage. This river, called by the natives, the Yaque, descends from the mountains of the interior, and in its course to the ocean receives the contributions of various minor streams. Columbus observed among the sands at its mouth, many particles of gold *, and found others adhering to the hoops of the water-casks ; wherefore he gave to this stream the name of Rio del Oro, or the golden river : it is at present called the Santiago.

* Las Casas suggests that these may have been particles of marcasite, which abounds in this river, and in the other streams which fall from the mountains of Cibao.—Las Casas, Hist. Ind., l.i., c. 76.

In this neighbourhood were turtles of great size. Columbus also mentions in his journal that he saw three mermaids which elevated themselves above the surface of the sea, and he observes that he had before seen such on the coasts of Africa. He adds that they were by no means the beautiful beings they had been represented, although they possessed some traces of the human countenance. It is supposed that these must have been manate or sea-calves, seen indistinctly and at a distance ; and that the imagination of Columbus, disposed to give a wonderful character to everything in this new world, had identified these misshapen animals with the sirens of ancient story.

On the evening of the 9th of January, they again made sail, and on the following day arrived at the river where Pinzon had been trading, to which Columbus gave the name of Rio de Gracia; but it took the appellation of its original discoverer, and long continued to be known as the river of Martin Alonzo. Here he had additional proofs of Pinzon's duplicity ; ascertaining that he had been sixteen days in the river, although

he had obliged his crew to declare that he had been but six ; and that he had received tidings of the shipwreck at the harbour of Nativity, but had delayed sailing to the assistance of the admiral, until he had served his own interests by collecting gold *. Columbus still forbore to notice this flagrant violation of duty ; but he obliged Pinzon to restore to their homes the four men and two girls whom he had taken from this neighbourhood, and who were dismissed well clothed, and with many presents, to atone for the wrong they had experienced, and to prevent its prejudicing the natives against the Spaniards. This restitution was made with great unwillingness, and many high words on the part of Pinzon.

The wind being favourable, for in these regions the trade wind is often alternated during autumn and winter by north-westerly breezes, they continued coasting the island, until they came to a high and beautiful headland, to which they gave the name of Cape del Enamorada, or the Lovers'

* Hist. del Almirante, c. 34.

Cape, but which at present is known as Cape Cabron. A little beyond this, they anchored in a vast bay, or rather gulf, three leagues in breadth, and extending so far inland, that Columbus at first supposed it might be an arm of the sea, separating Hispaniola from some other land. On landing they found the natives quite different from the gentle and pacific people they had hitherto met with on this island. These were of a ferocious aspect, and of a turbulent and warlike deportment. They were hideously painted, and wore their hair long and tied behind, and decorated with the feathers of parrots and other birds of gaudy plumage. They were armed with bows and arrows, war-clubs, and swords of a formidable kind. Their bows were of the length of those used by the English archers; their arrows were of slender reeds, pointed with hard wood, and sometimes tipped with bone or with the tooth of a fish. Their swords were of palm wood, as hard and heavy as iron: they were not sharp, but broad, nearly of the thickness of two fingers, and

capable, with one blow, of cleaving through a helmet to the very brains *. Though thus prepared for combat, the natives made no attempt to molest the Spaniards ; on the contrary, they sold the latter two of their bows and several of their arrows, and one of them was prevailed upon to go on board of the admiral's ship.

When Columbus beheld the ferocious looks, and hardy undaunted manner of this wild warrior, he was persuaded that he and his companions must be of the nation of Caribs so much dreaded throughout these seas, and that the gulf in which he was anchored must be a strait separating their island from Hispaniola. On inquiring of the Indian, however, he still pointed to the east, as the quarter in which were situated the Caribbean islands. He spoke also of an island, which he called Mantinino, which Columbus fancied him to say was peopled merely by women, who received the Caribs among them once in the course of a year, for the sake of continuing the population of their island. All the male progeny

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. i., cap. 77. MS.

resulting from such visits were delivered to the fathers, the female remained with the mothers.

This Amazonian island is repeatedly mentioned in the course of the voyages of Columbus, and is another of his self-delusions, which are to be explained by the work of Marco Polo. That traveller described two islands near the coast of Asia, one inhabited solely by women, the other by men, between which a similar intercourse subsisted*; and Columbus, supposing himself in that vicinity, easily interpreted the signs of the Indians to coincide with the descriptions of the Venetian.

Having regaled this warrior on board of the caravel, and made him various presents, the admiral sent him on shore, in hopes, through his mediation, of opening a trade for gold with his companions. As the boat approached the land, upwards of fifty savages, armed with bows and arrows, war-clubs, and javelins, were seen lurking among the trees. On a word from the Indian who was in the boat, they laid by their arms and

* Marco Polo, lib. iii., cap. 37.

came forth to meet the Spaniards. The latter, according to directions from the admiral, endeavoured to purchase several of their weapons, to take as curiosities to Spain. They parted with two of their bows ; but, suddenly conceiving some distrust, or thinking to overpower this handful of strangers, they rushed to the place where they had left their weapons, snatched them up, and returned with menacing looks, and provided with cords, as if to bind the Spaniards. The latter immediately attacked them, wounded two, and put the rest to flight, terrified at the flashing lustre and keen edge of the European weapons. The Spaniards would have pursued and put several to the sword, but they were restrained by the pilot who commanded the boat. This was the first contest they had had with the Indians, and the first time that native blood had been shed by the white men in the new world. Columbus lamented to see all his exertions to maintain an amicable intercourse vain : he consoled himself with the idea, however, that if these were Caribs, or frontier Indians of warlike character, they would be

inspired with a dread of the force, and the weapons of the white men, and would thus be deterred from molesting the little garrison of Fort Nativity. The fact was, that these were of the tribe of the Ciquayens, a bold and hardy race of Indians, inhabiting a mountainous district, extending five-and-twenty leagues along the coast, and several leagues into the interior. They differed in language, look, and manners, from the other natives of the island, and had more of the rude, but independent and vigorous character which belongs to mountaineers.

Their frank and bold spirit was evinced on the day after the skirmish, when, a multitude appearing on the beach, the admiral sent a large party, well armed, on shore in the boat. The natives immediately approached as freely and confidently as if nothing had happened ; neither did they betray, throughout their subsequent intercourse, any signs of lurking fear or enmity. The cacique who ruled over the neighbouring country was on the shore. He sent to the boat a string of beads formed of small stones, or rather of the hard part

of shells, which the Spaniards understood to be a token and assurance of amity ; but they were not yet aware of the full meaning of this symbol, which was the wampum belt, the pledge of peace, held sacred among the Indians. The chieftain followed shortly after, and entering the boat with only three attendants, was conveyed on board of the caravel.

This frank and confiding conduct, so indicative of a brave and generous nature, was properly appreciated by Columbus. He received the cacique with cordial friendship, set before him a collation such as the caravel afforded, particularly biscuits and honey, which appear to have been great dainties with the Indians, and after showing him the wonders of the vessel, and making him and his attendants many presents, sent them to land highly gratified by their entertainment. The residence of the cacique was at such a distance that he could not repeat his visit ; but as a token of high regard, he sent to the admiral his coronet of gold. In speaking of these incidents, the historians of Columbus have made no mention of the

name of this mountain chief; he was doubtless the same who, a few years afterwards, appears in the history of the island under the name of Mayonabex, Cacique of the Ciguayans, and will be found acquitted himself with valour, frankness, and magnanimity, under the most trying circumstances.

Columbus remained a day or two longer in the bay, during which time the most friendly intercourse prevailed with the natives, who brought cotton, and various fruits and vegetables, but still manifested their warrior character, being always armed with bows and arrows. From four young Indians, who came on board of the caravel, Columbus received such interesting accounts of the islands said to be situated to the east, that he determined to touch there on his way to Spain, and he prevailed on these young men to accompany him as guides. Taking advantage of a favourable wind, therefore, he sailed before daylight on the 16th of January from this bay, to which, in consequence of the skirmish with the natives, he gave the name of Golfo de las Flechas, or the Gulf of

Arrows, but which is now known by the name of the Gulf of Semana.

On leaving the bay, Columbus at first steered to the north-east, in which direction the young Indians assured him he would find the island of the Caribs, and that of Mantinino, the abode of the Amazons ; it being his desire to take several of the natives of each, to present to the Spanish sovereigns. After sailing about sixteen leagues, however, his Indian guides changed their opinion, and pointed to the south-east. This would have brought him to Porto Rico, which, in fact, was known among the Indians as the island of Carib. The admiral immediately shifted sail ; and stood in this direction. He had not proceeded two leagues, however, when a most favourable breeze sprang up for the voyage to Spain. He observed a gloom gathering on the countenances of the sailors, as they diverged from the homeward route. Reflecting upon the little hold he had upon the feelings and affections of these men, the insubordinate spirit they had evinced on former occasions in the voyage, the want of faith and loyalty on

the part of Pinzon, and also the leaky condition of his ships, he was suddenly brought to a pause. As long as he protracted his return, the whole fate of his discovery was at the mercy of a thousand contingencies, and an adverse accident might bury himself, his crazy barks, and all the records of his voyage for ever in the ocean. Repressing, therefore, the strong inclination to seek further discoveries, and determined to place what he had already made beyond the reach of accident, he once more shifted sail, to the great joy of his crews, and resumed his course for Spain *.

* Journal of Columb., Navarrete, t. 1. Las Casas, Hist. Ind., l. i., c. 77. Hist. del Almirante, cap. 34, 35.

CHAPTER II.

RETURN VOYAGE, VIOLENT STORMS, ARRIVAL
AT THE AZORES.

[1493.]

THE trade-winds which had been so propitious to Columbus on his outward voyage, wafting him with flowing sail to the New World, were equally adverse to him on his return. The favourable breeze soon died away, and, for the remainder of January, there was a prevalence of light winds from the eastward, which prevented his making any great progress. He was frequently detained also by the bad sailing of the Pinta : her foremast was defective, so that it could carry but little sail, an evil which Pinzon had neglected to remedy while in port, in his eager search after gold. The weather continued mild and pleasant, and the sea so calm, that the Indians whom they were taking to Spain, would frequently plunge into the water,

and swim about the ships. They saw many tunny fish, one of which they killed, as likewise a large shark ; these gave them a temporary supply of provisions, of which they soon began to stand in need ; their sea stock being reduced to bread and wine and Agi peppers, which they had learnt from the Indians to use as an important article of food.

In the early part of February, having run to about the thirty-eighth degree of north latitude, and got out of the track of ocean swept by the trade winds, they began to have more favourable breezes, and were enabled to steer direct for Spain. In consequence of the frequent changes of course, the pilots became extremely perplexed in their reckonings, differing widely among themselves, and still more widely from the truth. Columbus, beside keeping a reckoning with great care, was a vigilant observer of all those phenomena by which experienced seamen ascertain latitudes and longitudes, in what, to an unpractised eye, appears to be a blank expanse of ocean. In all his voyages, he studied the simple indications furnished by the sea, the air, and the sky,

with the watchful and anxious eye of a commander; the fate of himself and his ships, in the unknown regions which he traversed, often depended upon these observations, and the sagacity at which he arrived, in deciphering the signs of the elements, was looked upon by the common seamen as something almost supernatural. In the present instance, on his return homewards, he had noticed where the great bands of floating weeds commenced, and where they finished, and in emerging from among them, he concluded himself to be in about the same degree of longitude as when he encountered them on his outward voyage, that is to say, about two hundred and sixty leagues west of Ferro. On the 10th of February, Vicente Yañes Pinzon, and the pilots Ruiz and Bartolomeo Roldan, who were on board of the admiral's ship, examined the charts and compared their reckonings to determine their situation, but could not come to any agreement. They all supposed themselves at least one hundred and fifty leagues nearer Spain than what Columbus believed to be the true reckoning; and in the lati-

tude of Madeira, whereas he knew them to be nearly in a direction for the Azores. He suffered them, however, to remain in their error, and even added to their perplexity, that they might retain but a confused idea of the voyage, and he alone possess a clear knowledge of the route to the newly-discovered countries *.

On the 12th of February, as they were flattering themselves with soon coming in sight of land, the wind came on to blow violently, and the sea to be greatly agitated; they still kept their course to the east, but with great labour and peril, from the turbulence of the elements. On the following day, after sunset, the wind and swell increased; there were three flashes of lightning in the north-north-east, considered by Columbus as signals of an approaching tempest, either from that or the opposite quarter. It soon burst upon them with frightful violence: their small and crazy vessels, open and without decks, were little fitted for the wild storms of the Atlantic; all night they were obliged to remain

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., l. i., cap. 70.

under bare poles, driven along by the fury of the winds. As the morning dawned of the 14th, there was a transient pause, and they made a little sail; but the wind arose again, with redoubled vehemence from the south, raging throughout the day, and increasing in fury in the night, while the vessels laboured terribly in a cross sea, the broken waves of which threatened at each moment to overwhelm them, or dash them to pieces. For three hours, they lay with just sail enough to keep them above the waves; but the tempest still augmenting, they were obliged to give up all attempt to withstand it, and to scud before the wind. The Pinta did the same, but was soon lost sight of in the darkness of the night. The admiral kept as much as possible to the north-east, to approach to the coast of Spain, and made signal lights at the mast-head for the Pinta to do the same, and to keep in company. The latter, however, from the weakness of her foremast, could not hold the wind, and was obliged to scud before it, directly north. For some time she replied to the signals

of the admiral, but her lights gleamed more and more distant, until they ceased entirely, and nothing more was seen of her.

Columbus continued to scud all night, full of forebodings of the fate of his own vessel, and of fears for the safety of that of Pinzon. As the day dawned, the sea presented a frightful waste of wild broken waves, lashed into fury by the gale ; he looked around anxiously for the Pinta, but she was nowhere to be seen. He now made a little sail, to keep his vessel a-head of the sea, lest its huge waves should break over her. As the sun rose, the wind and the waves rose with it, and throughout a dreary day, the helpless bark was driven along by the fury of the tempest.

Seeing all human skill baffled and confounded, Columbus now endeavoured to propitiate heaven by solemn vows and acts of penance. By his orders, a number of beans, equal to the number of persons on board, were put into a cap, on one of which was cut the sign of the cross. Each of the crew made a vow, that, should he draw forth the marked bean, he would make a pilgrimage to the

shrine of Santa Maria de Guadalupe, bearing a wax taper of five pounds' weight. The admiral was the first to put in his hand, and the lot fell upon him. From that moment he considered himself a pilgrim, bound to perform the vow. Another lot was cast in the same way, for a pilgrimage to the chapel of our Lady of Loretto, which fell upon a seaman named Pedro de Villa, and the admiral engaged to bear the expenses of his journey. A third lot was also cast for a pilgrimage to Santa Clara de Moguer, to perform a solemn mass, and to watch all night in the chapel, and this likewise fell upon Columbus.

The tempest still raging with unabated violence, the admiral and all the mariners made a solemn vow, that, if they were spared to reach the land, wherever they first went on shore, they would go in procession, barefooted and in their shirts, to offer up prayers and thanksgivings in some church dedicated to the holy Virgin. Beside these general acts of propitiation, each one made his private vow, binding himself to some pilgrimage, or vigil, or other rite of penitence and

thanksgiving at his favourite shrine. Such has always been the custom with mariners of the catholic countries in times of tempest and peril ; but it was especially the case in that superstitious age. The heavens, however, seemed deaf to these pious vows ; the storm grew still more wild and frightful, and each man gave himself up for lost. The danger of the ship was augmented by the want of ballast, the consumption of the water and provisions having lightened her so much, that she rolled and tossed about at the mercy of the waves. To remedy this, and to render her more steady, the admiral ordered that all the empty casks should be filled with sea-water, which in some measure gave relief. During this long and awful conflict of the elements, the mind of Columbus was a prey to the most distressing anxiety. He feared that the Pinta had foundered in the storm. In such case the whole history of his discovery, the secret of the New World, depended upon his own feeble bark, and one surge of the ocean might bury it for ever in oblivion. The tumult of his thoughts may be

judged from his own letter to the sovereigns. "I could have supported this evil fortune with less grief," said he, "had my person alone been in jeopardy, since I am a debtor for my life to the supreme Creator, and have at other times been within a step of death. But it was a cause of infinite sorrow and trouble, to think, that after having been illuminated from on high with faith and certainty to undertake this enterprise, after having victoriously achieved it, and when on the point of convincing my opponents, and securing to your highnesses great glory and vast increase of dominions, it should please the divine Majesty to defeat all by my death. It would have been more supportable also, had I not been accompanied by others who had been drawn on by my persuasions, and who, in their distress, cursed not only the hour of their coming, but the fear inspired by my words which prevented their turning back, as they had at various times determined; above all, my grief was doubled when I thought of my two sons, whom I had left at school in Cordova, destitute, in a strange land, without

any testimony of the services rendered by their father, which, if known, might have inclined your highnesses to befriend them. And although, on the one hand, I was comforted by faith that the Deity would not permit a work of such great exaltation to his church, wrought through so many troubles and contradictions, to remain imperfect; yet, on the other hand, I reflected on my sins, as a punishment for which he might intend that I should be deprived of the glory which would redound to me in this world *.”

In the midst of these gloomy apprehensions, an expedient suggested itself to Columbus, by which, though he and his ships should perish, the glory of his achievements might survive to his name, and its advantages be secured to his sovereigns. He wrote on parchment a brief account of his voyage and discovery, and of his having taken possession of the newly-found lands in the name of their catholic majesties. This he sealed and directed to the king and queen, and superscribed also a promise of a thousand ducats to whosoever

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 36.

should deliver the packet unopened. He then wrapped it in a waxed cloth, which he placed in the centre of a cake of wax, and enclosing the whole in a large barrel, threw it into the sea, giving his men to suppose that he was performing some religious vow. Lest this memorial should never reach the land, he enclosed a copy in a similar manner, and placed it upon the poop, so that, should the caravel be swallowed up by the waves, the barrel might float off and survive.

These precautions in some measure mitigated his anxiety, and he was still more relieved when, after heavy showers, there appeared at sun-dawn a streak of clear sky in the west, giving hopes that the wind was about to shift to that quarter. These hopes were confirmed ; a favourable breeze succeeded, but the sea still ran so high and tumultuously, that but little sail could be carried during the night.

On the morning of the 15th, at day-break, the cry of land was given by Riu Garcia, a mariner stationed in the main-top. The transports of the crew, at once more gaining sight of the Old World,

were almost equal to what they had experienced on first beholding the New. The land was seen east-north-east, directly over the prow of the caravel ; and the usual diversity of opinion concerning it arose among the pilots. One thought that it must be the island of Madeira ; another the rock of Cintra near Lisbon ; the most part, deceived by their ardent wishes, placed it near Spain. Columbus, however, judging from his private reckonings and observations, concluded it to be one of the Azores. A nearer approach proved it to be an island : it was but five leagues distant, and the voyagers were congratulating themselves upon the assurance of speedily being in port, when suddenly the wind veered again to the east-north-east, blowing directly from the land, while a heavy sea kept rolling from the west.

For two days they remained hovering in sight of the island, vainly striving to reach it, or to arrive at another island of which they caught glimpses occasionally through the mist and rack of the tempest. On the evening of the 17th they

approached so near the first island they had seen, as to cast anchor, but they immediately parted their cable, and had to put to sea again, where they remained beating about until the following morning, when they anchored under shelter of its northern side. For several days, Columbus had been in such a state of agitation and anxiety, that he had scarcely taken any food or repose. Although suffering greatly from a gouty affection to which he was subject, yet he had maintained his watchful post on deck, exposed to wintry cold, to the pelting of the storm, and the drenching surges of the sea. It was not until the night of the 17th, that he was enabled to get a little sleep, more from the exhaustion of nature than from any tranquillity of mind. Such were the difficulties and perils which attended his return to Europe; had one-tenth part of them beset his outward voyage, his timid and factious crew would have risen in arms against the enterprise, and he never would have discovered the New World.

CHAPTER III.

TRANSACTIONS AT THE ISLAND OF ST. MARY'S.

[1492.]

ON sending the boat to land, Columbus ascertained that the island where he had thus arrived was St. Mary's, the most southern of the Azores, and a possession of the crown of Portugal. The inhabitants, when they beheld the light caravel riding at anchor, were astonished that it had been able to live through the gale which had raged for fifteen days with unexampled fury; but when they heard that this tempest-tossed vessel brought tidings of a strange country beyond the ocean, they were filled with wonder and curiosity. To the inquiries of the boat's crew about a place where the caravel might anchor securely, they replied by pointing out a harbour in the vicinity; but when the boat was about to depart, they prevailed on three of the mariners to remain on shore, and gratify them with further particulars of this unparalleled voyage.

In the evening, three men of the island hailed the caravel, and a boat being sent for them, they brought on board fowls, bread, and refreshments of various kinds, from Juan de Castañeda, governor of the island, who claimed an acquaintance with Columbus, and sent him many compliments and congratulations. He apologized for not coming in person, owing to the lateness of the hour, and the distance of his residence, but promised to visit them the next morning, and to bring further refreshments, and the three men whom he still kept with him to satisfy his extreme curiosity respecting the voyage. As there were no houses on the neighbouring shore, the messengers remained on board all night.

On the following morning, Columbus reminded his people of the vow made during their recent peril, to perform a pious procession at the first place where they should land. On the neighbouring shore, at no great distance from the sea, was a small hermitage or chapel dedicated to the Virgin, which was favourable for the purpose, and he made immediate arrangements for the per-

formance of the rite. The three messengers, on returning to the village, sent a priest to perform mass, and one-half of the crew landing, walked in procession, barefooted, and in their shirts, to the chapel; while the admiral awaited their return, to perform the same ceremony with the remainder of his men.

An ungenerous reception, however, awaited the poor tempest-tossed mariners on their first return to the abode of civilized men, far different from the sympathy and hospitality they had experienced among the savages of the New World. Scarcely had they began their prayers and thanksgivings, when the whole rabble of the village, horse and foot, headed by the governor, surrounded the hermitage and took them all prisoners.

As an intervening point of land hid the hermitage from the view of the caravel, the admiral remained in ignorance of this transaction. When eleven o'clock arrived without the return of the pilgrims, he began to fear that they were detained by the Portuguese, or that the boat had

been shattered upon the surf-beaten rocks which bordered the island. Weighing anchor, therefore, he stood in a direction to command a view of the chapel and the adjacent shore ; from hence he beheld a number of armed horsemen, who, dismounting, entered the boat and made for the caravel. The admiral's ancient suspicions of Portuguese hostility towards himself and his enterprises, were immediately revived, and he ordered his men to arm themselves, but to keep out of sight, ready either to defend the vessel or surprise the boat. The latter, however, approached in a pacific manner ; the governor of the island was on board, and, coming within hail, demanded assurance of personal safety in case he should enter the caravel. This the admiral readily gave, but the Portuguese, still distrustful and conscious of their own sinister designs, continued to maintain a wary distance. The indignation of Columbus now broke forth ; he reproached the governor with his perfidy, and with the wrong he did, not merely to the Spanish monarchs, but to his own sovereign by such a disho-

nourable outrage. He informed him of his own rank and dignity, displayed his letters patent sealed with the royal seal of Castile, and threatened him with the vengeance of his government. The reply of Castañeda was in an arrogant vein of contempt for the letters of the monarchs, and of defiance of Columbus, and he concluded by declaring that all he had done was in conformity to the commands of the king his sovereign.

After an unprofitable altercation, the boat returned to shore, leaving Columbus much perplexed by this unexpected hostility, and fearful that a war might have broken out between Spain and Portugal during his absence. The next day the weather became so tempestuous that they were driven from their anchorage, and obliged to stand to sea toward the island of St. Michael. For two days the ship continued beating about in great peril, half of her crew being detained on shore, and the greater part of those on board being landsmen and Indians, almost equally useless in difficult navigation. Fortunately, although the waves ran high, there were none of those cross

seas which had recently prevailed, otherwise, being so feebly manned, the caravel could scarcely have lived through the storm.

On the evening of the 22d, the weather having moderated, Columbus returned once more to his anchorage at St. Mary's. Shortly after his arrival, a boat came off, bringing two priests and a notary. After a cautious parley and an assurance of safety, they came on board of the caravel, and requested a sight of the papers of Columbus, on the part of Castañeda, assuring him that it was the disposition of the governor to render him every service in his power, provided he really sailed in service of the Spanish sovereigns. Columbus saw it was a mere manœuvre of Castañeda to cover a retreat from the hostile position he had assumed ; he restrained his indignation, however, expressing his thanks for the friendly disposition of the governor, and, showing his letters of commission, easily satisfied the priests and the notary. On the following morning, the boat and mariners were liberated. The latter, during their detention, had collected information from the inhabitants which elucidated the conduct of Castañeda.

The king of Portugal, jealous lest the expedition of Columbus might interfere with his own discoveries, had sent orders to his commanders of islands and distant ports to seize and detain him wherever he should be met with *. In compliance with these orders, Castañeda had, in the first instance, hoped to surprise Columbus in the chapel, and, failing in that attempt, had intended to get him in his power by stratagem, but was deterred by finding him on his guard. Such was the first reception of the admiral on his return to the Old World, an earnest of the crosses and troubles with which he was to be requited throughout life, for one of the greatest benefits that ever man had conferred upon his fellow beings.

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 39. Las Casas, Hist. Ind., l. i., cap. 72.

CHAPTER IV.

ARRIVAL AT PORTUGAL. VISIT TO THE COURT.

[1493.]

COLUMBUS remained two days longer at the island of St. Mary's, endeavouring to take in wood and ballast, but was prevented by the heavy surf which broke upon the shore. The wind veering to the south, and being dangerous for vessels at anchor off the island, but favourable for the voyage to Spain, he set sail on the 24th of February, and had pleasant weather until the 27th, when, being within one hundred and twenty-five leagues of Cape St. Vincent, he again encountered contrary gales, and a boisterous and laborious sea. The fortitude of Columbus was scarcely proof against these perils and delays, which appeared to increase, the nearer he approached his home; and he could not help uttering a complaint at thus being repulsed as it were from the very door of the house. He contrasted the rude storms

which raged about the coasts of the Old World, with the genial airs, the tranquil seas, and balmy weather which he supposed perpetually to prevail about the favoured countries he had discovered. “Well,” says he, “may the sacred theologians and sage philosophers declare that the terrestrial paradise is in the uttermost extremity of the east, for it is the most temperate of regions.”

After experiencing several days of stormy and adverse weather, about midnight on Saturday the 2d of March, the caravel was suddenly struck by a squall of wind, which rent all her sails, and, continuing to blow with resistless violence, she was obliged to scud under bare poles, threatened each moment with destruction. In this hour of darkness and peril, the crew again called upon the aid of heaven. A lot was cast for the performance of a bare-footed pilgrimage to the shrine of Santa Maria de la Ceuta in Huelva, and, as usual, the lot fell upon Columbus. There was something singular in the recurrence of this circumstance. Las Casas devoutly considers it as an intimation from the Deity to the admiral that these

storms were all on his account, to humble his pride, and prevent his arrogating to himself the glory of a discovery which was the work of God, and for which he had merely been chosen as an instrument *.

Various signs appeared of their being in the vicinity of land, which they supposed must be the coast of Portugal : the tempest, however, increased to such a degree, that they doubted whether any of them would survive to reach a port. The whole crew made a vow, in case their lives were spared, to fast upon bread and water the following Saturday. The turbulence of the elements was still greater in the course of the following night. The sea was broken, wild, and mountainous ; at one moment the light caravel was tossed high in the air, and the next moment she seemed sinking in a yawning abyss. The rain at times fell in torrents, and the lightning flashed and the thunder pealed from various parts of the heavens.

In the first watch of this fearful night, the sea-

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. i., c. 73.

men gave the usually welcome cry of land, but it now only increased the general alarm. They knew not where they were, nor where to look for a harbour; they dreaded being driven on shore, or dashed upon the rocks, and thus the very land they had so earnestly desired was rendered a terror to them. Taking in sail, therefore, they kept to sea as much as possible, and waited anxiously for the morning light.

At day-break on the 4th of March, they found themselves off the rock of Cintra, at the mouth of the Tagus. Though entertaining a strong distrust of the good-will of Portugal, the still prevailing tempest left Columbus no alternative but to run in for shelter; and he accordingly anchored about three o'clock, opposite to Rastello, to the great joy of the crew, who returned thanks to God for their escape from so many perils.

The inhabitants came off from various parts of the shore, congratulating them upon what they considered a miraculous preservation. They had been watching the vessel the whole morning with great anxiety, and putting up prayers for her

safety. The oldest mariners of the place assured Columbus that they had never known so tempestuous a winter ; many vessels had remained for months in port, weather-bound, and there had been numerous shipwrecks during the season.

Immediately on his arrival, Columbus dispatched a courier to the king and queen of Spain, with the great tidings of his discovery. He wrote also to the King of Portugal, who was then at Valparaiso, requesting permission to go with his vessel to Lisbon ; a report had got abroad that his caravel was laden with gold, and he felt himself insecure in the mouth of the Tagus, in the neighbourhood of a place like Rastello, scantily peopled by needy and adventurous inhabitants. To prevent any misunderstanding as to the nature of his voyage, he assured the king that he had not been on the coast of Guinea, nor to any other of the Portuguese colonies, but had come from Cipango and the extremity of India, which he had discovered by sailing to the west.

On the following day, Don Alonso de Acuña, the captain of a large Portuguese man-of-war,

stationed at Rastello, summoned Columbus on board his ship, to give an account of himself and his vessel. The latter immediately asserted his rights and dignities as admiral of their Castilian majesties, and refused to leave his vessel, or to send any one in his place. No sooner, however, did the commander learn his rank, and the extraordinary nature of his voyage, than he came to the caravel with great sound of drums, fifes, and trumpets, showing Columbus the courtesies of a brave and generous spirit, and making the fullest offer of his services. When the tidings reached Lisbon of this wonderful bark, which lay anchored in the Tagus, freighted with the people and the productions of a newly-discovered world, the effect may be more easily conceived than described. Lisbon, for nearly a century, had derived its chief glory from its maritime discoveries, but here was an achievement that eclipsed them all. Curiosity could scarcely have been more excited had the vessel come freighted with the wonders of another planet. For several days the Tagus presented a gay and moving picture,

covered with barges and boats of every kind, swarming round the caravel. From morning till night the vessel was thronged with visitors, among whom were cavaliers of high distinction, and various officers of the crown. All hung with rapt attention upon the accounts given by Columbus and his crew, of the events of their voyage, and of the New World they had discovered ; and gazed with insatiable curiosity upon the specimens of unknown plants and animals, but above all, upon the Indians, so different from any race of men hitherto known. Some were filled with generous enthusiasm at the idea of a discovery, so sublime and so beneficial to mankind ; the avarice of others was inflamed by the descriptions of wild unappropriated regions, teeming with gold, with pearls and spices ; while others repined at the incredulity of the king and his councillors, by which so immense an acquisition had been for ever lost to Portugal.

On the 8th of March, a cavalier, called Don Martin de Noroña, came with a letter from King John, congratulating Columbus on his arrival, and

inviting him to court, which was then held at Valparaiso, about nine leagues from Lisbon. The king, with his usual magnificence, issued orders at the same time that everything which the admiral required, for himself, his crew, or his vessel, should be furnished promptly and abundantly, without cost.

Columbus would gladly have declined the royal invitation, feeling distrust of the good faith of the king; but the tempestuous weather placed him in his power, and he thought it prudent to avoid all appearance of suspicion. He set forth, therefore, that very evening for Valparaiso, accompanied by his pilot. The first night he slept at Sacamben, where preparations had been made for his honourable entertainment. The weather being rainy, he did not reach Valparaiso until the following night. On approaching the royal residence, the principal cavaliers of the king's household came forth to meet him, and attended him with great ceremony to the palace. His reception by the monarch was worthy of an enlightened prince. He ordered him to seat him-

self in his presence, an honour only granted to persons of royal dignity, and after many congratulations on the glorious result of his enterprise, assured him that everything in his kingdom that could be of service to his sovereigns or himself, was at his command.

A long conversation ensued in which Columbus gave an account of his voyage, and of the countries he had discovered. The king listened with much seeming pleasure, but with secret grief and mortification ; the idea was incessantly preying upon his mind, that this splendid enterprise had once been offered to himself, had, in a manner, been begging for patronage at his court, and had been rejected. A casual observation showed what was passing in his thoughts. He expressed a doubt whether the discovery did not really appertain to the crown of Portugal, according to the capitulations of the treaty of 1479 with the Castilian sovereigns. Columbus replied that he had never seen those capitulations, nor knew anything of their nature : his orders had been not to go to La Mina, nor the coast of Guinea, which

orders he had carefully observed. The king made a gracious reply, expressing himself satisfied that he had acted correctly, and persuaded that these matters would be readily adjusted between the two powers, without the need of umpires. On dismissing Columbus for the night, he gave him in charge, as guest, to the prior of Crato, the principal personage present, by whom he was honourably and hospitably entertained.

On the following day, the king had further conversation with the admiral, in which he made many minute inquiries as to the soil, productions, and people of the newly-discovered countries, and the route he had taken in his voyage; to all which Columbus gave the fullest replies, endeavouring to convince the royal mind, in the clearest manner, that these were regions heretofore undiscovered and unappropriated by any christian power. Still, the king was uneasy lest this vast and undefined discovery should in some way interfere with his own newly-acquired territories. He doubted whether Columbus had not found a short way to those very countries which were the

object of his own expeditions, and which were comprehended in the papal bull, granting to the crown of Portugal all the lands which it should discover from Cape Non to the Indias.

On suggesting these doubts to his councillors, they eagerly confirmed them. Some of these were the very persons who had once derided this enterprise, and scoffed at Columbus as a dreamer. To them, its success was a source of confusion ; every demonstration of its importance was felt as a reproach, and the return of Columbus, covered with glory, was a deep humiliation. Incapable of conceiving the high and generous thoughts which elevated him at that moment above all mean considerations, they attributed to all his actions the most petty and ignoble motives. His rational exultation was construed into an insulting triumph, and they accused him of assuming a boastful and vain-glorious tone, when talking with the king of his discovery ; as if he would revenge himself upon the monarch for having rejected his propositions *. It was with the greatest

* Vasconcelles, *Vida de D. Juan XI.*, lib. vi. The Portuguese historians

eagerness, therefore, that they sought to foster these doubts, which had sprung up in the royal mind. Some who had seen the natives brought in the caravel, declared that their colour, hair, and manners, agreed with the descriptions of the people of that part of India which lay within the route of the Portuguese discoveries, and which had been included in the papal bull. Others observed that there was but little distance between the Tercera Islands, and those which Columbus had discovered, and that the latter, therefore, clearly appertained to Portugal. Seeing the king deeply perturbed in spirit, some even went so far as to propose, as a means of impeding the prosecution of these enterprises, that Columbus should be assassinated ; declaring that he deserved death for attempting to deceive and embroil the two nations, by his pretended discove-

in general charge Columbus with having conducted himself loftily, and talked in vaunting terms of his discoveries, in his conversations with the king. It is evident their information must have been derived from prejudiced courtiers. Faria y Souza, in his *Europa Portuguesa* (Parte III., c. iv.) goes so far as to say that Columbus entered into the port of Rastello merely to make Portugal sensible, by the sight of the trophies of his discovery, how much she had lost by not accepting his propositions.

ries. It was suggested that his assassination might easily be accomplished without incurring any odium; advantage might be taken of his lofty deportment to pique his pride, provoke him into an altercation, and then despatch him as if in casual and honourable encounter.

It is difficult to believe that such wicked and dastardly counsel could have been proposed to a monarch so upright as John II., but the fact is asserted by various historians, Portuguese as well as Spanish *, and it accords with the perfidious advice formerly given to the monarch in respect to Columbus. There is a spurious loyalty about courts, which is often prone to prove its zeal by its baseness; and it is the weakness of kings to tolerate the grossest faults that appear to arise from personal devotion.

Happily, the king had too much magnanimity to adopt the iniquitous measure proposed. He did justice to the great merit of Columbus, and honoured him as a distinguished benefactor of

* Vasconcelles, *Vida del Rei, Don Juan II.*, l. vi. Garcia de Reesende, *vida do Dom Joam II.* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, l. i., c. 74, MS.

mankind; and he felt it his duty, as a generous prince, to protect all strangers driven by adverse fortune to his ports. Others of his council suggested a more bold and martial line of policy. They advised that Columbus should be permitted to return to Spain; but that, before he could fit out a second expedition, a powerful armament should be despatched, under the guidance of two Portuguese mariners who had sailed with the admiral, to take possession of the newly-discovered country; possession being after all the best title, and an appeal to arms the clearest mode of settling so doubtful a question.

This counsel, in which there was a mixture of courage and craft, was more relished by the king, and he resolved privately, but promptly, to put it in execution, fixing upon Dom Francisco de Almeida, one of the most distinguished captains of the age, to command the expedition *.

In the mean time, Columbus after being treated with distinguished attention, was escorted back to his ship by Don Martin de Noroña, and a

* Vasconcelles, I. vi.

numerous train of cavaliers of the court, a mule being provided for himself, and another for his pilot, to whom the king made a present of twenty espadinos, or ducats of gold*. On his way, Columbus stopped at the monastery of San Antonio, at Villa Franca, to visit the queen, who had expressed an earnest wish to see him. He found her attended by a few of her favourite ladies, and experienced the most flattering reception. Her majesty made him relate the principal events of his voyage, and describe the countries he had found, while she and her ladies hung with eager curiosity upon the narration of this extraordinary and enterprising man, whose achievement was the theme of every tongue. That night he slept at Llandra, and being on the point of departing in the morning, a servant of the king arrived, offering, on the part of his majesty, to attend him to the frontier, if he preferred to return to Spain by land, and to provide horses, lodgings, and everything he might stand

* Twenty-eight dollars in gold of the present day, and equivalent to seventy-four dollars, considering the depreciation of the precious metals.

in need of, at the royal expense. The weather, however, having moderated, he preferred returning in his caravel. Putting to sea once more, therefore, on the 13th of March, he arrived safely at the bar of Saltes on sun-rise of the 15th, and at mid-day entered the harbour of Palos, from whence he had sailed on the 3d of August in the preceding year ; having taken not quite seven months and a half to accomplish this most momentous of all maritime enterprises *.

* Works generally consulted in this chapter :—Las Casas, Hist. Ind., l. i., c. 74 ; Hist. del Almirante, c. 39, 40, 41 ; Journal of Columb., Naverrete, t. i.

CHAPTER V.

RECEPTION OF COLUMBUS AT PALOS.

[1493.]

THE triumphant return of Columbus, was a prodigious event in the history of the little port of Palos, where everybody was more or less interested in the fate of his expedition. The most important and wealthy sea-captains of the place had engaged in it, and scarcely a family but had some relative or friend among the navigators. The departure of the ships, upon what appeared a chimerical and desperate cruise, had spread gloom and dismay over the place ; and the storms which had raged throughout the winter had heightened the public despondency. Many lamented their friends as lost, while imagination lent mysterious horrors to their fate, picturing them as driven about over wild and desert wastes of water without a shore, or as perishing amidst rocks and

quicksands, and whirlpools ; or a prey to those monsters of the deep, with which credulity, in those days, peopled every distant and unfrequented sea*. There was something more awful in such a mysterious fate than in death itself, under any defined and ordinary form.

When the news arrived, therefore, that one of the adventurous ships was standing up the river, the inhabitants were thrown into great agitation ; but when they heard that she returned in triumph from the discovery of a world, and beheld her furling her sails in their harbour, the whole community broke forth into transports of joy. The bells were rung, the shops shut, all business was suspended ; for a time there was nothing but the hurry and tumult of sudden exultation and breathless curiosity. Some were anxious to know the fate of a relative, others of a friend, and all

* In the maps and charts of those times, and even in those of a much later date, the variety of formidable and hideous monsters depicted in all remote parts of the ocean, evince the terrors and dangers with which the imagination clothed it. The same may also be said of distant and unknown lands ; the remote parts of Asia and Africa have monsters depicted in them which it would be difficult to trace to any originals in natural history.

to learn particulars of so wonderful a voyage. When Columbus landed, the multitude thronged to see and welcome him, and a grand procession was formed to the principal church, to return thanks to God for so signal a discovery made by the people of that place,—the unthinking populace forgetting, in their exultation, the thousand difficulties which they had thrown in the way of the enterprise. Wherever Columbus passed, the streets resounded with shouts and acclamations ; he received such honours as are paid to sovereigns, but to him they were rendered with tenfold warmth and sincerity. What a contrast was this to his departure a few months before, followed by murmurs and execrations ; or, rather, what a contrast to his first arrival at Palos, a poor pedestrian, craving bread and water for his child at the gate of a convent !

Understanding that the court was at Barcelona, Columbus felt disposed to proceed thither immediately in his caravel ; reflecting, however, on the dangers and disasters he had already experienced on the seas, he resolved to proceed by land. He

despatched a letter to the king and queen, informing them of his arrival, and soon after departed for Seville to await their orders, taking with him six of the natives whom he had brought from the New World. One had died at sea, and three were left ill at Palos.

It is a singular coincidence, which appears to be well authenticated, that on the very evening of the arrival of Columbus at Palos, and while the peals of triumph were still ringing from its towers, the Pinta, commanded by Martin Alonzo Pinzon, likewise entered the river. After her separation from the admiral in the storm, she had been driven before the gale into the Bay of Biscay, and had made the port of Bayonne. Doubting whether Columbus had survived the tempest, and, at all events, anxious to anticipate him, and to secure the favourable prepossessions of the court and the public, Pinzon had immediately written to the sovereigns, giving information of the discovery he had made, and had requested permission to come to court and communicate the particulars in person. As soon as

the weather permitted, he had again set sail, anticipating a triumphant reception in his native port of Palos. When, on entering the harbour, he beheld the vessel of the admiral riding at anchor, and learnt the enthusiasm with which he had been received, and the rejoicings with which his return had been celebrated, the heart of Pinzon died within him. He called to mind his frequent arrogance and insubordination, and his wilful desertion off the coast of Cuba, by which he had impeded the prosecution of the voyage. It is said that he feared to meet Columbus in this hour of his triumph, lest he might put him under arrest ; but it is more probable that he was ashamed to appear before the public in the midst of his rejoicings, as a recreant to the cause which excited such universal admiration. Getting into his boat, therefore, he landed privately, and kept himself out of sight until he heard of the admiral's departure. He then returned to his home, broken in health and deeply dejected. Palos had been his little world, in which he had moved with unrivalled importance ; but now he found himself

fallen in public opinion, and fancied the finger of scorn continually pointed at him. All the honours lavished on Columbus, all the rapturous eulogiums of his enterprise, sunk into the soul of Pinzon as so many reproaches on himself; and when at length he received a severe and reproachful reply to the letter he had written to the sovereigns, his morbid feelings added virulence to his malady, and in a few days he died, the victim of envy and remorse *.

He was a man of great spirit and enterprise, one of the ablest seamen of the age, and the head of a family that continued to distinguish itself among the early discoverers. He had contributed greatly to encourage Columbus when poor and unknown in Spain, offering him his purse, and entering with hearty concurrence into his plans. He had assisted him by his personal influence at Palos, combating the public prejudices, and promoting the manning and equipping of his vessels, when even the orders of the sovereigns were of

* Muñoz, Hist. N. Munde, l. iv., § 14. Charlevoix, Hist. S. Domingo, l. ii.

no avail ; he had advanced the part of the funds to be borne by the admiral ; finally, he had embarked with his brothers in the expedition, staking life as well as property on the event. He had thus entitled himself to participate largely in the glory of this immortal enterprise ; but forgetting the grandeur of the cause, he had deserted the high object in view, and by yielding to the impulse of a low and sordid passion, had tarnished his character for ever. That he was a man naturally of generous sentiments is evident from the poignancy of his remorse ; a mean man could not have fallen a victim to self-upbraiding for having committed a mean action. His story shows how one lapse from duty may counterbalance the merits of a thousand services ; how one moment of weakness may mar the beauty of a whole life of virtue ; and how important it is for a man, under all circumstances, to be true, not merely to others, but to himself *.

* The children and heirs of Martin Alonzo Pinzon shewed, in subsequent years, a great animosity against Columbus, seeking in various ways to depreciate the merit of his discoveries, or to gain the credit of it to their father. Among other extravagancies, it was asserted, that before the sovereigns

accepted the proposition of Columbus, Pinzon had prepared to go at his own cost and risk, in two of his own ships, in search of lands in the west, of which he had some notice from papers found in the Papal library at Rome, and also from a prophecy of the time of Soloman, in which it was written, that navigating from Spain westward, by a temperate course between north and south, at ninety-five degrees of longitude, would be found the fertile and abundant island of Cipango. Muñoz, Hist. N. Munde, I. iv., § 14.

It will not be uninteresting here to insert a few particulars concerning Palos and the Pinzons, furnished me by a friend, and which he had gathered in a voyage on board of the steam-boat between Seville and Cadiz. "On my way down the river," says he, "I found a sailor on board, a native of Huelva. He was intelligent for his situation, and I gathered from him the following information, which may be depended upon. Palos is dwindled to a paltry village of about four hundred inhabitants, and has only four or five barks, which are employed in fishing. The neighbouring town of Huelva has greatly increased, and chiefly at its expense. La Rabida, the monastery of Franciscans, still exists, and is inhabited by friars of that order. It is situated on a hill that overlooks the low sand plains of the surrounding country. The family of the Pinzons removed long since to Huelva, where there are now four or five branches of them. They are not wealthy: they venerate the memory of their ancestor, and preserve some documents in his hand-writing; they also follow his profession. Near San Lucar, the sailor pointed out to me a small trim-looking felucca, commanded by a young Pinzon of that family. The same sailor mentioned to me incidentally that he had been employed in Seville to fit an awning to the house of a canon, the last descendant of Hernando Cortes."

CHAPTER VI.

RECEPTION OF COLUMBUS BY THE SPANISH COURT AT BARCELONA.

THE letter of Columbus to the Spanish monarchs, announcing his discovery, had produced the greatest sensation at court. The event he communicated, was considered the most extraordinary of their prosperous reign, and following so close upon the conquest of Granada, was pronounced a signal mark of divine favour for that triumph achieved in the cause of true faith. The sovereigns themselves were for a time dazzled and bewildered by this sudden and easy acquisition of a new empire, of indefinite extent, and apparently boundless wealth ; and their first idea was to secure it beyond the reach of question or competition. Shortly after his arrival in Seville, Columbus received a letter from them expressing their great delight, and requesting him to repair immediately to court, to concert plans for a

second and more extensive expedition. As the summer was already advancing, the time favourable for a voyage, they desired him to make any arrangements at Seville or elsewhere that might hasten the expedition, and to inform them, by the return of the courier, what was to be done on their part. This letter was addressed to him by the title of "Don Christopher Columbus, our admiral of the ocean sea, and viceroy and governor of the islands discovered in the Indias ;" at the same time he was promised still further rewards. Columbus lost no time in complying with the commands of the sovereigns. He sent a memorandum of the ships, men, and munitions that would be requisite, and having made such dispositions at Seville as circumstances permitted, set out on his journey for Barcelona, taking with him the six Indians, and the various curiosities and productions which he had brought from the New World.

The fame of his discovery had resounded throughout the nation, and as his route lay through several of the finest and most populous

provinces of Spain, his journey appeared like the progress of a sovereign. Wherever he passed, the surrounding country poured forth its inhabitants, who lined the road and thronged the villages. In the large towns, the streets, windows, and balconies, were filled with eager spectators, who rent the air with acclamations. His journey was continually impeded by the multitude pressing to gain a sight of him and of the Indians, who were regarded with as much astonishment as if they had been natives of another planet. It was impossible to satisfy the craving curiosity which assailed himself and his attendants at every stage with innumerable questions ; popular rumour, as usual, had exaggerated the truth, and had filled the newly-found country with all kinds of wonders.

It was about the middle of April that Columbus arrived at Barcelona, where every preparation had been made to give him a solemn and magnificent reception. The beauty and serenity of the weather in that genial season and favoured climate, contributed to give splendour to this memorable ceremony. As he drew near the place,

many of the more youthful courtiers, and hidalgos of gallant bearing, together with a vast concourse of the populace, came forth to meet and welcome him. His entrance into this noble city has been compared to one of those triumphs which the Romans were accustomed to decree to conquerors. First, were paraded the Indians, painted according to their savage fashion, and decorated with their national ornaments of gold. After these were borne various kinds of live parrots, together with stuffed birds and animals of unknown species, and rare plants, supposed to be of precious qualities ; while great care was taken to make a conspicuous display of Indian coronets, bracelets, and other decorations of gold, which might give an idea of the wealth of the newly-discovered regions. After this, followed Columbus on horseback, surrounded by a brilliant cavalcade of Spanish chivalry. The streets were almost impassable from the countless multitude ; the windows and balconies were crowded with the fair ; the very roofs were covered with spectators. It seemed as if the public eye could not

be sated with gazing on these trophies of an unknown world ; or on the remarkable man by whom it had been discovered. There was a sublimity in this event that mingled a solemn feeling with the public joy. It was looked upon as a vast and signal dispensation of providence, in reward for the piety of the monarchs ; and the majestic and venerable appearance of the discoverer, so different from the youth and buoyancy that are generally expected from roving enterprise, seemed in harmony with the grandeur and dignity of his achievement.

To receive him with suitable pomp and distinction, the sovereigns had ordered their throne to be placed in public, under a rich canopy of brocade of gold, in a vast and splendid saloon. Here the king and queen awaited his arrival, seated in state, with the prince Juan beside them, and attended by the dignitaries of their court, and the principal nobility of Castile, Valentia, Catalonia, and Arragon, all impatient to behold the man who had conferred so incalculable a benefit upon the nation. At length Columbus entered

the hall, surrounded by a brilliant crowd of cavaliers, among whom, says Las Casas, he was conspicuous for his stately and commanding person, which with his countenance, rendered venerable by his gray hairs, gave him the august appearance of a senator of Rome ; a modest smile lighted up his features, shewing that he enjoyed the state and glory in which he came* ; and certainly nothing could be more deeply moving to a mind inflamed by noble ambition, and conscious of having greatly deserved, than these testimonials of the admiration and gratitude of a nation, or rather of a world. As Columbus approached, the sovereigns rose, as if receiving a person of the highest rank. Bending his knees, he requested to kiss their hands ; but there was some hesitation on the part of their majesties to permit this act of vassallage. Raising him in the most gracious manner, they ordered him to seat himself in their presence ; a rare honour in this proud and punctilious court *.

At the request of their majesties, Columbus

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., l. i., c. 78, MS.

† Las Casas, Hist. Ind., l. i., c. 78. Hist. del Almirante, cap. 81.

now gave an account of the most striking events of his voyage, and a description of the islands which he had discovered. He displayed the specimens he had brought of unknown birds, and other animals ; of rare plants of medicinal and aromatic virtues ; of native gold in dust, in crude masses, or laboured into barbaric ornaments ; and, above all, the natives of these countries, who were objects of intense and inexhaustible interest ; since there is nothing to man so curious as the varieties of his own species. All these he pronounced mere harbingers of greater discoveries he had yet to make, which would add realms of incalculable wealth to the dominions of their majesties, and whole nations of proselytes to the true faith.

The words of Columbus were listened to with profound emotion by the sovereigns. When he had finished, they sank on their knees, and raising their clasped hands to heaven, their eyes filled with tears of joy and gratitude, they poured forth thanks and praises to God for so great a providence : all present followed their example, a deep and solemn enthusiasm pervaded that splendid

assembly, and prevented all common acclamations of triumph. The anthem of *Te Deum laudamus*, chanted by the choir of the royal chapel, with the melodious responses of the minstrels, rose up from the midst in a full body of sacred harmony ; bearing up, as it were, the feelings and thoughts of the auditors to heaven, “so that,” says the venerable Las Casas, “it seemed as if in that hour they communicated with celestial delights.” Such was the solemn and pious manner in which the brilliant court of Spain celebrated this sublime event ; offering up a grateful tribute of melody and praise, and giving glory to God for the discovery of another world.

When Columbus retired from the royal presence, he was attended to his residence by all the court, and followed by the shouting populace. For many days he was the object of universal curiosity, and wherever he appeared, he was surrounded by an admiring multitude. While the mind of Columbus was thus teeming with glorious anticipations, his pious scheme for the deliverance of the holy sepulchre was not forgotten. It has

been shewn that he suggested it to the Spanish sovereigns at the time of first making his propositions, holding it forth as the great object to be effected by the profits of his discoveries.Flushed with the idea of the vast wealth that was now to accrue to himself, he made a vow to furnish within seven years an army, consisting of four thousand horse, and fifty thousand foot, for the rescue of the holy sepulchre, and a similar force within the five following years. This vow was recorded in one of his letters to the sovereigns, to which he refers, but which is no longer extant, nor is it certain whether it was made at the end of his first voyage, or at a subsequent date, when the magnitude and wealthy result of his discoveries became more fully manifest. He often alludes to it vaguely in his writings, and he refers to it expressly in a letter to Pope Alexander VI., written in 1502, in which he accounts also for its non-fulfilment. It is essential to a full comprehension of the character and motives of Columbus, that this wild and visionary project should be borne in recollection. It will be found to have entwined

itself in his mind with his enterprise of discovery, and that a holy crusade was to be the consummation of those divine purposes, for which he considered himself selected by heaven as an agent. It shews how much his mind was elevated above selfish and mercenary views. How it was filled with those devout and heroic schemes, which in the time of the crusades had inflamed the thoughts and directed the enterprises of the bravest warriors and most illustrious princes.

CHAPTER VII.

SOJOURN OF COLUMBUS AT BARCELONA.

ATTENTIONS PAID HIM BY THE
SOVEREIGNS AND COURTIERS.

[1493.]

THE joy occasioned by this great discovery was not confined to Spain. The tidings were spread far and wide by embassies, by the correspondence of the learned, by the negotiations of merchants, and the reports of travellers. Allegretto Allegretti, a contemporary writer, in his *Annals of Sienna* for 1493, mentions it as just made known at that court by the letters of their merchants who were in Spain, and by the mouths of various travellers*. The news was brought to Genoa by the return of her ambassadors, Francesco Marchezi and Giovanni Antonio Grimaldi, and was recorded among the triumphant events of the year†. The republic, though she may have

* Diarj. Senesi de Alleg. Allegretti. Muratori Ital. script., t. 23.

† Foglieta Istoria di Genova, d. 2.

slighted the opportunities of making herself mistress of the discovery, has ever since been tenacious of the glory of having given birth to the discoverer. Sebastian Cabot mentioned that he was in London when news was brought there of the discovery, and that it caused great talk and admiration in the court of Henry VII., being affirmed “to be a thing more divine than human *.”

The whole civilized world, in fact, was filled with wonder and delight. Every one rejoiced in it as an event in which he was more or less interested, and as opening a new and unbounded field for inquiry and enterprise. Of the exultation of the learned, we have a proof in a letter of Peter Martyr to his friend Pomponius Lœtus. “ You tell me, my amiable Pomponius,” he writes, “ that you leaped for joy, and that your delight was mingled with tears, when you read my epistles certifying to you the hitherto hidden world of the Antipodes. You have felt and acted as became a man distinguished for learning. What aliment more delicious than such tidings

* Hackluyt, Collect. Voyages, p. 7.

can be set before an ingenious mind. I feel a happiness of spirit when I converse with intelligent people who have returned from these regions. It is like an accession of wealth to a miser. Our minds, soiled with vices, become meliorated by contemplating such glorious events *.”

Notwithstanding all this triumph, however, no one as yet was aware of the real importance of this discovery. No one had an idea that this was a totally distinct portion of the globe, separated by oceans from the ancient world. The opinion of Columbus was universally adopted, that Cuba was the end of the Asiatic continent, and that the adjacent islands were in the Indian seas. This agreed with the opinions of the ancients, heretofore cited about the moderate distance from Spain to the extremity of India, sailing westwardly. The parrots were also thought to resemble those described by Pliny as abounding in the remote parts of Asia. The lands, therefore, which Columbus had visited were called the West Indias, and as he seemed to have entered upon a vast

* Letters of Peter Martyr, 1. 53.

region of unexplored countries, existing in a state of nature, the whole received the comprehensive appellation of “the New World.”

During the whole of his sojourn at Barcelona, the sovereigns took every occasion to bestow on Columbus personal marks of their high consideration. He was admitted at all times to the royal presence, and the queen delighted to converse with him on the subject of his enterprises. The king too appeared occasionally on horseback, with Prince Juan on one side, and Columbus on the other. To perpetuate in his family the glory of his achievement, a coat of arms was assigned him, in which the royal arms, the castle and lion, were quartered with those more peculiarly assigned to him, a group of islands surrounded by waves. To these arms were afterwards annexed the motto,—

POR CASTILLA Y POR LEON
NEUVO MUNDO HALLO' COLON.

(FOR CASTILE AND LEON
COLUMBUS FOUND A NEW WORLD.)

The pension of thirty crowns* which had been

* Equal to a value in gold of thirty-nine dollars, and equivalent to one hundred and seventeen dollars in one day.

decreed by the sovereigns to him, who, in the first voyage, should discover land, was adjudged to Columbus, for having first seen the light on the shore. It is said that the seaman who first descried the land was so incensed at being disappointed of what he conceived his merited reward, that he renounced his country and his faith, and, going into Africa, turned mussulman ; an anecdote which rests on the authority of Oviedo *, who is extremely incorrect in his narration of this voyage, and inserts several falsehoods told him by the enemies of the admiral.

It may appear, at first sight, but little accordant with the acknowledged magnanimity of Columbus, to have borne away the prize from this poor sailor, but this was a subject in which his whole ambition was involved, and he was, doubtless, proud of the honour of being personally the discoverer of the land, as well as the projector of the enterprise.

Next in importance to the protection shown him by the king and queen, may be mentioned that of

* Oviedo, *Cromia de las Indias*, l. ii., c. 5.

Pedro Gonzalez de Mendoza, the Grand Cardinal of Spain, and first subject of the realm ; a man whose elevated character for piety, learning, and high prince-like qualities, gave signal value to his favours. He invited Columbus to a banquet, where he assigned him the most honourable place at table, and had him served with the ceremonies which, in those punctilious times, were observed towards sovereigns. At this repast is said to have occurred the well-known anecdote of the egg. A shallow courtier present, impatient of the honours paid to Columbus, and meanly jealous of him as a foreigner, abruptly asked him whether he thought that, in case he had not discovered the Indies, there were not other men who would have been capable of the enterprise. To this, Columbus made no immediate reply, but, taking an egg, invited the company to make it stand upon one end. Every one attempted it, but in vain, whereupon he struck it upon the table so as to break the end, and left it standing on the broken part ; illustrating, in this simple manner, that when he had once shown the way to the

New World, nothing was easier than to follow it *.

The favour shown Columbus by the sovereigns, ensured him, for a time, the caresses of the nobility : for in a court every one vies with his neighbour in lavishing attentions upon the man “ whom the king delighteth to honour.” He bore all these caresses and distinctions with becoming modesty, though he must have felt a proud satisfaction in the idea, that they had been wrested, as it were, from the nation by his courage and perseverance. One can hardly recognise in the individual, thus made the companion of princes, the theme of general wonder and admiration, the same obscure stranger, who, but a short time before, had been a common scoff and jest in this very court, derided by some as an adventurer, and pointed out by others as a madman. Those who had treated him with contumely during his long course of solicitation, now sought to efface

* This anecdote rests on the authority of the Italian historian Benzoni (l. i., p. 12, ed. Venetia, 1572). It has been condemned as trivial, but the simplicity of the reproof constituted its severity, and was characteristic of the practical sagacity of Columbus. The universal popularity of the anecdote is a proof of its merit.

the remembrance of it by adulations. Every one who bestowed upon him a supercilious patronage, or a few courtly smiles, now arrogated to himself the credit of having been a patron, and of having promoted the discovery of the new world. Scarce a great man about the court, but has been enrolled by his historian or biographer among the benefactors of Columbus ; though, had one-tenth part of this boasted patronage been really exerted, he would never have had to linger seven years soliciting for an armament of three caravels. Columbus knew well the weakness of the patronage that had been given him. The only friends mentioned by him with gratitude, in his after letters, as having been really zealous and effective, were those two worthy friends, Diego de Deza, afterwards Bishop of Palencia and Seville, and Juan Perez, Prior of the Convent of la Rabida.

Thus, honoured by the sovereigns, courted by the great, idolized by the people, Columbus, for a time, drank the honeyed draught of popularity, before enmity and detraction had time to drug it with bitterness. His discovery burst with such

sudden splendour upon the world, as to dazzle envy itself, and to call forth the general acclamations of mankind. Well would it be for the honour of human nature, could history, like romance, close with the consummation of the hero's wishes ; we should then leave Columbus in the full fruition of great and well-merited prosperity. But his history is destined to furnish another proof, if proof be wanting, of the inconstancy of public favour, even when won by distinguished services. No greatness was ever acquired by more incontestable, unalloyed, and exalted benefits rendered to mankind, yet none ever drew on its possessor more unremitting jealousy and defamation, or involved him in more unmerited distress and difficulty. Thus it is with illustrious merit : its very effulgence draws forth the rancorous passions of low and grovelling minds, which too often have a temporary influence in obscuring it to the world ; as the sun emerging with full splendour into the heavens, calls up, by the very fervour of its rays, the rank and noxious vapours which, for a time, becloud his glory.

CHAPTER VIII.

PAPAL BULL OF PARTITION. PREPARATIONS
FOR A SECOND VOYAGE OF COLUMBUS.

[1493.]

IN the midst of their rejoicings, the Spanish sovereigns lost no time in taking every measure necessary to secure their new acquisitions. Although it was supposed that the countries just discovered were part of the territories of the Grand Khan, and of other oriental princes, considerably advanced in civilization, yet there does not appear to have been the least doubt of the right of their catholic majesties to take possession of them. During the crusades, a doctrine had been established among the christian princes extremely favourable to their ambitious designs. According to this, they had the right to invade, ravage, and seize upon, the territories of all infidel nations, under the plea of defeating the enemies of Christ, and extending the sway of his holy church on earth. In conformity to the same doc-

trine, the pope, from his supreme authority over all temporal things, was considered as empowered to dispose of all heathen lands to such pious potentates as would engage to reduce them to the dominion of the church, and to propagate the true faith among their benighted inhabitants. It was in virtue of this power, that Pope Martin V. and his successors had conceded to the crown of Portugal all the lands it might discover from Cape Bojador to the Indies ; and the catholic sovereigns, in a treaty concluded in 1479 with the Portuguese monarch, had engaged themselves to respect the territorial rights thus acquired. It was to this treaty that John II. alluded, in his conversation with Columbus, wherein he suggested his title to the newly-discovered countries.

On the first intelligence received from the admiral of his success, therefore, the Spanish sovereigns took the immediate precaution to secure the sanction of the Pope. Alexander VI. had recently been elevated to the holy chair ; a pontiff whom some historians have stigmatized with every vice and crime that could disgrace huma-

nity, but whom all have represented as eminently able and politic. He was a native of Valencia, and being born a subject of the crown of Arragon, it might be inferred, was favourably disposed to Ferdinand; but in certain questions which had come before him, he had already shown a disposition not the most cordial towards the catholic monarch. At all events, Ferdinand was well aware of his worldly and perfidious character, and endeavoured to manage him accordingly. He despatched ambassadors, therefore, to the court of Rome, announcing the new discovery as an extraordinary triumph of the faith ; setting forth the great glory and gain which must redound to the church from the dissemination of Christianity throughout these vast and heathen lands. Care was also taken to state, that the present discovery did not in the least interfere with the possessions ceded by the holy chair to Portugal, all which had been sedulously avoided. Ferdinand, who was at least as politic as he was pious, insinuated a hint at the same time, by which the pope might perceive that he was de-

terminated, at all events, to maintain his important acquisitions. His ambassadors were instructed to state that, in the opinion of many learned men, these newly-discovered lands, having been taken possession of by the catholic sovereigns, their title to the same did not require the papal sanction ; still, as pious princes, obedient to the holy chair, they supplicated his holiness to issue a bull, making a concession of them, and of such others as might be discovered, to the crown of Castile.

The tidings of the discovery were received, in fact, with great astonishment and no less exultation by the court of Rome. The Spanish sovereigns had already elevated themselves to high consequence in the eyes of the church, by their war against the Moors of Spain, which had been considered in the light of a pious crusade ; and though richly repaid by the acquisition of the kingdom of Granada, it was thought to entitle them to the gratitude of all Christendom. The present discovery was a still greater achievement ; it was the fulfilment of one of the sublime promises to

the church ; it was giving to it “the heathen for an inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession.” No difficulty, therefore, was made in granting what was considered but a modest request for so important a service ; though it is probable that the acquiescence of the worldly-minded pontiff was quickened by the insinuations of the politic monarch.

A bull was accordingly issued, dated May 2d, 1493, ceding to the Spanish sovereigns the same rights, privileges and indulgences, in respect to the newly-discovered regions, as had been accorded to the Portuguese, with regard to their African discoveries, under the same condition of planting and propagating the catholic faith. To prevent any conflicting claims, however, between the two powers in the wide range of their discoveries, another bull was issued on the following day, containing the famous line of demarcation, by which their territories were thought to be clearly and permanently defined. This was an ideal line drawn from the north to the south pole, a hundred leagues to the west of the Azores, and

the Cape de Verd islands. All land discovered by the Spanish navigators to the west of this line, and which had not been taken possession of by any christian power before the preceding Christmas, was to belong to the Spanish crown: all land discovered in the contrary direction, was to belong to Portugal. It seems never to have occurred to the pontiff, that, by pushing their opposite careers of discovery, they might some day or other come again in collision, and renew the question of territorial right at the Antipodes.

In the mean time, without waiting for the sanction of the court of Rome, the utmost exertions were made by the sovereigns to fit out a second expedition. To ensure regularity and dispatch in the affairs relative to the New World, they were placed under the superintendence of Juan Rodriguez de Fonseca, archdeacon of Seville, who was successively promoted to the sees of Badajoz, Palencia, and Burgos, and finally appointed patriarch of the Indies. He was a man of family and influence; his brothers Alonzo and Antonio were seniors, or lords, of Coca and

Alacyos, and the latter was comptroller-general of Castile. Juan Rodriguez de Fonseca is represented by Las Casas as a worldly man, more calculated for temporal than spiritual concerns, and well adapted to the bustling occupation of fitting out and manning armadas. Notwithstanding the high ecclesiastical dignities to which he rose, his worldly employments seem never to have been considered incompatible with his sacred functions. Enjoying a perpetual, though unmerited favour, of the sovereigns, he maintained the control of Indian affairs for about thirty years. He must undoubtedly have possessed talents for business, to ensure him such perpetuity of office: but he was malignant and vindictive; and in the gratification of his private resentments, not only heaped wrongs and sorrows upon the most illustrious of the early discoverers, but frequently impeded the progress of their enterprises, to the great detriment of the crown. This he was enabled to do privately and securely by his official situation. His perfidious conduct is repeatedly alluded to, but in guarded terms, by contempo-

rary writers of weight and credit, such as the curate of Los Palacios, and the bishop Las Casas; but they evidently were fearful of expressing the fulness of their feelings. Subsequent Spanish historians, always more or less controlled by ecclesiastical supervision, have likewise dealt too favourably with this base-minded man. He deserves to be held up as a warning example of those perfidious beings in office, who too often lie like worms at the root of honourable enterprise, blighting, by their unseen influence, the fruits of glorious action, and disappointing the hopes of nations.

To assist Fonseca in his duties, Francisco Pinelo was associated with him as treasurer, and Juan de Soria as contador, or comptroller. Their office, for the transaction of Indian affairs, was fixed at Seville ; extending its vigilance at the same time to the port of Cadiz, where a custom-house was established for this new branch of navigation. Such was the germ of the Royal India House, which afterwards rose to such great power and importance. A correspondent office was ordered

to be instituted in Hispaniola, under the direction of the Admiral. These offices were to interchange registers of the cargoes, crews, and munition of each ship, by accountants who sailed with it. All persons thus employed were dependants upon the two comptrollers-general, superior ministers of the royal revenue ; since the crown was to be at all the expenses of the colony, and to receive all the emoluments.

The most minute and rigorous account was to be exacted of all expenses and proceeds ; and the most vigilant caution observed as to the persons employed in the concerns of the newly-discovered lands. No one was permitted to go there either to trade or to form an establishment, without express license from the sovereigns, from Columbus, or from Fonseca, under the heaviest penalties. The ignorance of the age as to enlarged principles of commerce, and the example of the Portuguese in respect to their African possessions, have been cited in excuse of the narrow and jealous spirit here manifested ; but it always more or less influenced the policy of Spain in her colonial regulations.

Another instance of the despotic sway maintained by the crown over commerce, is manifested in a royal order, that all ships in the ports of Andalusia, with their captains, pilots, and crews, should be held in readiness to serve in this expedition. Columbus and Fonseca were authorised to freight or purchase any of those vessels they might think proper, and to take them by force, if refused, even though they had been freighted by other persons, paying what they should conceive a reasonable price. They were furthermore authorised to take the requisite provisions, arms, and ammunition, from any place or vessel in which they might be found, paying a fair price to the owners ; and they might compel, not merely mariners, but any officer holding any rank or station whatever, whom they should deem necessary to the service, to embark in the fleet, on a reasonable pay and salary. The civil authorities, and all persons of rank and standing, were called upon to render all requisite aid in expediting the armament, and warned against creating any impediment, under penalty of privation of office and confiscation of

estate. To provide for the expenses of the expedition, the royal revenue arising from two-thirds of the church tithes was placed at the disposition of Pinelo; and other funds were drawn from a disgraceful source, from the jewels and other valuables, the sequestrated property of the unfortunate Jews, banished from the kingdom, according to a bigoted edict of the preceding year. As these resources were still inadequate, Pinelo was authorised to supply the deficiency by a loan. Requisitions were likewise made for provisions of all kinds, as well as for artillery, powder, muskets, lances, corselets, and cross-bows. This latter weapon, notwithstanding the introduction of firearms, was still preferred by many to the arquebuss, and considered more formidable and destructive; the other having to be used with a match-lock, and being so heavy as to require an iron rest. The military stores which had accumulated during the war with the Moors of Granada, furnished a great part of these supplies. Almost all the preceding orders were issued by the 23rd of May, while Columbus was yet at Barcelona. Rarely

has there been witnessed such a scene of activity in the dilatory offices of Spain.

As the conversion of the Heathens was professed to be the grand object of these discoveries, twelve zealous and able ecclesiastics were chosen for the purpose, to accompany the expedition. Among these was Bernardo Buyl or Boyl, a Benedictine monk, of talent and reputed sanctity, but one of those subtle politicians of the cloister, who in those days glided into all temporal concerns. He had acquitted himself with success in recent negotiations with France, relative to the restitution of Rousillon. Before the sailing of the fleet, he was appointed by the pope his Apostolical Vicar for the new world, and placed as superior over his ecclesiastical brethren. This pious mission was provided with all things necessary for the dignified performance of its functions ; the queen supplying from her own chapel the ornaments and vestments to be used in all solemn ceremonies. Isabella, from the first, took the most warm and compassionate interest in the welfare of the Indians. Won by the accounts given

by Columbus of their gentleness and simplicity, and looking upon them as committed by heaven to her especial care, her pious heart was filled with concern at their destitute and ignorant condition. She ordered that great care should be taken of their religious instruction ; that they should be treated with the utmost kindness ; and enjoined Columbus to inflict signal punishment on all Spaniards who should be guilty of outrage or injustice towards them.

By way, as it was said, of offering to heaven the first-fruits of these pagan nations, the six Indians whom Columbus had brought to Barcelona, were baptized with great state and ceremony ; the king, the queen, and prince Juan officiating as sponsors. Great hopes were entertained that, on their return to their native country, they would facilitate the introduction of christianity among their countrymen. One of them, at the request of prince Juan, remained in his household, but died not long afterwards : a Spanish historian* remarked that, according to what ought to be our

* Herrera, Hist., Ind. decad. 1., l. ii., cap. 5.

pious belief, he was the first of his nation that entered heaven.

Before the departure of Columbus from Barcelona, the provisional agreement made at Santafè was confirmed, granting him the titles, emoluments, and prerogatives of admiral, viceroy, and governor of all the countries he had discovered, or might discover. He was intrusted also with the royal seal, with authority to use the names of their majesties in granting letters-patent and commissions within the bounds of his jurisdiction; with the right also, in case of absence, to appoint a person in his place, and to invest him, for the time, with the same powers.

It had been premised in the agreement, that for all vacant offices in the government of the islands and main land, he should nominate three candidates, out of which number the sovereign should make a choice; but now, to save time, and to show their confidence in Columbus, they empowered him to appoint at once such persons as he thought proper, who were to hold their offices during the royal pleasure. He had likewise the

title and command of captain-general of the armament about to sail, with unqualified powers as to the government of the crews, the establishments to be formed in the New World, and the ulterior discoveries to be undertaken.

This was the honey-moon of royal favour, during which Columbus enjoyed the unbounded and well-merited confidence of his sovereigns, before envious minds had dared to insinuate a doubt of his integrity. After receiving every mark of public honour and private regard, he took leave of the sovereigns on the 28th of May. The whole court accompanied him from the palace to his dwelling, and attended, also, to pay him farewell honours on his departure from Barcelona for Seville.

CHAPTER IX.

DIPLOMATIC NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE COURTS OF SPAIN AND PORTUGAL WITH RESPECT TO THE NEW DISCOVERIES.

[1493.]

THE anxiety of the Spanish monarchy for the speedy departure of the expedition, was heightened by the proceedings of the court of Portugal. John II. had unfortunately among his councillors certain politicians of that short-sighted class, who mistake craft for wisdom. By adopting their perfidious policy, he had lost the New World when it was an object of honourable enterprise ; in compliance with their advice, he now sought to retrieve it by subtle stratagem. He had accordingly prepared a large armament, the avowed object of which was an expedition to Africa, but its real destination to seize upon the newly-discovered countries. To lull suspicion, Don Ruy de Sande was sent ambassador to the Spanish court, requesting permission to procure certain prohi-

bited articles from Spain for this African voyage. He required also, that the Spanish sovereigns should forbid their subjects to fish beyond Cape Bojador, until the possessions of the two nations should be properly defined. The discovery of Columbus, the real object of solicitude, was treated as an incidental affair. The manner of his arrival and reception in Portugal was mentioned; the congratulations of King John on the happy result of his voyage; his satisfaction at finding that the admiral had been instructed to steer westward from the Canary Islands, and his hope that the Castilian sovereigns would continue to enjoin a similar track to their navigators,—all to the south of those islands being granted by papal bull to the crown of Portugal. He concluded by intimating the entire confidence of King John, that should any of the newly-discovered islands appertain by right to Portugal, the matter would be adjusted in that spirit of amity which existed between the two crowns.

Ferdinand was too wary a politician to be easily deceived. He had received early intelligence of

the real designs of King John, and before the arrival of his ambassador he had himself despatched Don Lope de Herrera to the Portuguese court, furnished with double instructions, and with two letters of widely opposite tenor. The first was couched in affectionate terms, acknowledging the hospitality and kindness shown to Columbus, and communicating the nature of his discoveries, requesting at the same time that the Portuguese navigators might be prohibited from visiting those newly-discovered lands, in the same manner that the Spanish sovereigns had prohibited their subjects from interfering with the African possessions of Portugal.

In case, however, the ambassador found that King John had either sent, or was about to send, vessels to the New World, he was to withhold the amicable letter, and present the other, couched in stern and peremptory terms, forbidding any enterprise of the kind*. A keen diplomatic game ensued between the two sovereigns, perplexing to any spectator not acquainted with the

* Herrera, Hist. Ind., decad. 1, l. ii. Zurita, Anales de Aragon, l. i, c. 25.

secret of their play. Reesende, in his history of King John II., informs us, that the Portuguese monarch, by large presents, or rather bribes, held certain of the confidential members of the Castilian cabinet in his interest, who informed him of the most secret councils of their court. The roads were covered with couriers ; scarce was an intention expressed by Ferdinand to his ministers, but it was conveyed to his rival monarch. The result was, that the Spanish sovereigns seemed as if under the influence of some enchantment. King John anticipated all their movements, and appeared to dive into their very thoughts. Their ambassadors were crossed on the road by Portuguese ambassadors, empowered to settle the very points on which they were to make remonstrances. Frequently, when Ferdinand proposed a sudden and perplexing question to the envoys at his court, which apparently would require fresh instructions from the sovereigns, he would be astonished by a prompt and positive reply ; most of the questions which were likely to occur, having, through secret information, been foreseen and

provided for. As a surmise of treachery in the cabinet might naturally arise, King John, while he rewarded his agents in secret, endeavoured to divert suspicions from them upon others, making rich presents of jewels to the Duke de Infantado and other Spanish grandes of incorruptible integrity*.

Such is the intriguing diplomatic craft which too often passes for refined policy, and is extolled as the wisdom of the cabinet ; but all corrupt and disingenuous measures are unworthy of an enlightened politician and a magnanimous prince. The grand principles of right and wrong operate in the same way between nations as between individuals ; fair and open conduct, and inviolable faith, however they may appear adverse to present purposes, are the only kind of policy that will ensure ultimate and honourable success.

King John, having received intelligence, in the furtive manner that has been mentioned, of the double instructions furnished to Don Lope de

* Reesendi, *Vida del Rey Dom Joham.* II. cap. 157. Faria y Souza, *Europa Portuguesa,* t. ii., c. 4, p. 3.

Herrera, received him in such a manner as to prevent any resort to his peremptory letter. He had already despatched an extra envoy to the Spanish court to keep it in good humour, and he now appointed Doctor Pero Diaz and Don Ruy de Pena ambassadors to the Spanish sovereigns, to adjust all questions relative to the new discoveries, and promised that no vessel should be permitted to sail on a voyage of discovery within sixty days after their arrival at Barcelona.

These ambassadors were instructed to propose, as a mode of effectually settling all claims, that a line should be drawn from the Canaries due west ; all lands and seas north of it to appertain to the Castilian court ; all south to the crown of Portugal, excepting any islands already in possession of either powers *.

Ferdinand had now the vantage-ground ; his object was to gain time for the preparation and departure of Columbus, by entangling King John in long diplomatic negotiations †. In reply to his proposals, he despatched Don Pedro de Ayala and

* Quirita, lib. 1., cap. 25. Herrera, decad. 1., l. ii., cap. 5.

† Vasconcelos, Don Juan II., lib. vi.

Don Garcia Lopez de Caravajal on a solemn embassy to Portugal, in which there was great outward pomp and parade, and many professions of amity, but the whole purport of which was to propose to submit the territorial questions which had arisen between them to arbitration, or to the court of Rome. This stately embassy moved with becoming slowness, but a special envoy was sent in advance to apprise the King of Portugal of its approach, in order to keep him waiting for its communications.

King John understood the whole nature and object of the embassy, and felt that Ferdinand was foiling him. The ambassadors at length arrived, and delivered their credentials with great form and ceremony. As they retired from his presence, he looked after them contemptuously : “ This embassy from our cousin,” said he, “ wants both head and feet.” He alluded to the character both of the mission and the envoys. Don Garcia de Caravajal was vain and frivolous, and Don Pedro de Ayala, was lame of one leg*.

* Vasconcelos, lib. yi. Barros, Asia, d. I., l. iii., cap. 2.

In the height of his vexation, King John is even said to have held out some vague shew of hostile intentions, taking occasion to let the ambassadors discover him reviewing his cavalry, and dropping ambiguous words in their hearing, which might be construed into something of menacing import*. The embassy returned to Castile, leaving him in a state of perplexity and irritation ; but whatever might be his chagrin, his discretion prevented him from coming to an open rupture. He had some hopes of interference on the part of the Pope, to whom he had sent an embassy, complaining of the pretended discoveries of the Spaniards, as infringing the territories granted to Portugal by papal bull, and earnestly imploring redress. Here, as has been shown, his wary antagonist had been beforehand with him, and he was doomed again to be foiled. The only reply his ambassador received, was a reference to the line of partition from pole to pole, so sagely devised by his holiness†. Such was

* Vasconcelos, lib. vi.

† Herrera, decad. I., l. ii., cap.

this royal game of diplomacy, where the parties were playing for a newly-discovered world. John II. was able and intelligent, and had crafty councillors to advise him in all his moves ; but whenever deep and subtle policy was required, Ferdinand was master of the game.

CHAPTER X.

FURTHER PREPARATIONS FOR THE SECOND VOYAGE.
CHARACTER OF ALONSO DE OJEDA. DIFFERENCE
OF COLUMBUS WITH SORIA AND FONSECA.

[1493.]

DISTRUSTFUL of some attempt on the part of Portugal to interfere with their discoveries, the Spanish sovereigns, in the course of their negotiations, wrote repeatedly to Columbus, urging him to hasten his departure. His zeal, however, needed no incitement; immediately on arriving at Seville, in the beginning of June, he had proceeded with all diligence to fit out the armament, making use of the powers given him to put in requisition the ships and crews which were in the harbours of Andalusia. He was joined soon after by Fonseca and Soria, who had remained for a time at Barcelona, and, with their united exertions, a fleet of seventeen vessels, large and small, were soon in a state of preparation. The

best pilots were chosen for the service, and the crews were mustered in presence of Soria the comptroller. A number of skilful husbandmen, miners, carpenters, and other mechanics, were engaged for the projected colony. Horses, both for military purposes and for stocking the country, cattle, and domestic animals of all kinds, were likewise provided. Grain, seeds of various plants, vines, sugar-canæs, grafts, and saplings, were embarked, together with a great quantity of merchandise, consisting of trinkets, beads, hawks-bells, looking-glasses, and other shewy trifles, calculated for trafficking with the natives. Nor was there wanting an abundant supply of provisions of all sorts, munitions of war, and medicines and refreshments for the sick.

An extraordinary degree of excitement prevailed respecting this expedition. The most extravagant fancies were entertained with respect to the New World. The accounts given by the voyagers who had visited it were full of exaggeration; for in fact they had nothing but vague and confused notions concerning it, like the re-

collections of a dream, and it has been shewn that Columbus himself had beheld every thing through the most delusive medium. The vivacity of his descriptions, and the sanguine anticipations of his ardent spirit, while they aroused the public to a wonderful degree of enthusiasm, prepared the way for bitter disappointment. The cupidity of the avaricious was inflamed with the idea of regions of unappropriated wealth, where the rivers rolled over golden sands, and the mountains teemed with gems and precious metals ; where the groves produced spices and perfumes, and the shores of the ocean were sown with pearl. Others had conceived visions of a loftier kind. It was a romantic and stirring age, and the wars with the Moors being over, and hostilities with the French suspended, the bold and restless spirits of the nation, impatient of the monotony of peaceful life, were eager for employment. To these, the New World presented a vast field for wild enterprise and extraordinary adventure, so congenial to the Spanish character in that period of its meridian fervour and brilliancy. Many hidalgos of

high rank, officers of the royal household, and Andalusian cavaliers, schooled in arms, and inspired with a passion for hardy achievements by the romantic wars of Granada, pressed into the expedition, some in the royal service, others at their own cost. To them, it was the commencement of a new series of crusades, surpassing in extent and splendour the chivalrous enterprises to the Holy Land. They pictured to themselves vast and beautiful islands of the ocean to be over-run and subdued; their internal wonders to be explored, and the banner of the cross to be planted on the walls of the cities they were supposed to contain. From thence they were to make their way to the shores of India, or rather Asia, penetrate into Mangi and Cathay, convert, or what was the same thing, conquer, the Grand Khan, and thus open a glorious career of arms among the splendid countries and semi-barbarous nations of the east. Thus, no one had any definite idea of the object or nature of the service on which he was embarking, or the situation and character of the region to which he was bound. Indeed, during this

fever of the imagination, had sober facts and cold realities been presented, they would have been rejected with disdain; for there is nothing of which the public is more impatient than of being disturbed in the indulgence of any of its golden dreams.

Among the noted personages who engaged in the expedition, was a young cavalier of the name of Don Alonso de Ojeda, celebrated for his extraordinary personal endowments and his daring spirit; and who distinguished himself by many perilous expeditions and singular exploits among the early discoveries. He was of a good family, cousin-german to the venerable father Alonso de Ojeda, Inquisitor of Spain; had been brought up under the patronage of the Duke of Medina Celi, and had served in the wars against the Moors. He was of small size, but vigorous make, well proportioned, dark complexioned, of handsome animated countenance, and incredible strength and agility. Expert at all kinds of weapons, accomplished in all manly and warlike exercises, an admirable horseman, and a partizan

soldier of the highest order. Bold of heart, free of spirit, open of hand, fierce in fight, quick in brawl, but ready to forgive and prone to forget an injury, he was for a long time the idol of the rash and roving youth who engaged in the early expeditions to the New World, and has been made the hero of many wonderful tales. On introducing him to historical notice, Las Casas gives an anecdote of one of his exploits which would be unworthy of record, but that it exhibits the singular character of the man.

Queen Isabella being in the tower of the principal church of Seville, better known as the Giralda, Ojeda, to entertain her majesty, and to give proofs of his courage and agility, mounted on a great beam which projected in the air, twenty feet from the tower, at such an immense height from the ground, that the people below looked like dwarfs, and it was enough to make Ojeda himself shudder to look down. Along this beam he walked briskly, and with as much confidence as though he had been pacing his chamber. When arrived at the end, he stood on one leg,

lifting the other in the air; then turning nimbly round, he returned in the same way to the tower, unaffected by the giddy height, from whence the least false step would have precipitated him and dashed him to pieces. He afterwards stood with one foot on the beam, and placing the other against the wall of the building, threw an orange to the summit of the tower, a proof, says Las Casas, of immense muscular strength. Such was Alonso de Ojeda, who soon became conspicuous among the followers of Columbus, and was always foremost in every enterprise of an adventurous nature; who courted peril as if for the very love of danger, and seemed to fight more for the pleasure of fighting than for the sake of distinction*.

The number of persons permitted to embark in the expedition had been limited to one thousand; but such was the urgent application of volunteers to be permitted to enlist without pay, that the number had increased to twelve hundred.

* Las Casas, lib. i. MS. Pizarro, Varones Illustres. - Herrera, Hist. Ind., decad. 1, l. ii., c. 5.

Many more were refused for want of room in the ships for their accommodation, but some contrived to get admitted by stealth, so that eventually about fifteen hundred set sail in the fleet. As Columbus, in his laudable zeal for the welfare of the enterprise, provided every thing that might be necessary in various possible emergencies, the expenses of the outfit exceeded what had been anticipated. This gave rise to occasional demurs on the part of the comptroller Juan de Soria, who sometimes refused to sign the accounts of the admiral, and in the course of their transactions seemed to have forgotten the deference due both to his character and station. For this he received repeated and severe reprimands from the sovereigns, who emphatically commanded that Columbus should be treated with the greatest respect, and every thing done to facilitate his plans and yield him satisfaction. From similar injunctions inserted in the royal letters to Fonseca, the archdeacon of Seville, it is probable that he also had occasionally indulged in the captious exercise of his official powers. He appears to have demurred

to various requisitions of Columbus, particularly one for footmen and other domestics for his immediate service, to form his household and retinue as admiral and viceroy, a demand which was considered superfluous by the prelate, as all who embarked in the expedition were at his command. In reply, the sovereigns ordered that he should be allowed ten *escuderos de à pie*, or footmen, and twenty persons in other domestic capacities, and reminded Fonseca that they had charged him that, both in the nature and mode of his transactions with the admiral, he should study to give him content; observing that, as the whole armament was intrusted to his command, it was but reasonable that his wishes should be consulted, and that no one should embarrass him with punctilios and difficulties *.

These trivial differences are worthy of particular notice, from the effect they appear to have had on the mind of Fonseca, for from them we must date the first rise of that singular hostility which he ever afterwards manifested towards Columbus,

* Navarrete Collec., vii., 2. Documentos, No. 62—66.

which every year increased in rancour, and which he gratified in the most invidious manner, by secretly multiplying impediments and vexations in his path.

While the expedition was yet lingering in port, intelligence was received that a Portuguese caravel had set sail from Madeira and steered for the west. Suspicions were immediately awakened that she was bound for the lately-discovered lands. Columbus wrote an account of it to the sovereigns, and prepared to despatch a part of his fleet in pursuit of her. His proposition was approved, but not carried into effect. On remonstrances being made to the court of Lisbon, King John declared that the vessel had sailed without his permission, and that he would send three caravels to bring her back. This only served to increase the jealousy of the Spanish monarchs, who considered the whole a deep-laid stratagem, and that it was intended the vessels should join their forces, and pursue their course together to the New World. Columbus was urged, therefore, to depart without an hour's delay, and in-

structed to steer wide of Cape St. Vincent, and entirely avoid the Portuguese coasts and islands, for fear of molestation. If he met with any vessels in the seas he had explored, he was to seize them, and inflict rigorous punishment on the crews. Fonseca was also ordered to be on the alert, and in case any expedition sailed from Portugal to send double the force after it. These precautions, however, proved unnecessary. Whether such caravels actually did sail, and whether they were sent with sinister motives by Portugal, does not appear ; nothing was either seen or heard of them by Columbus in the course of his voyage.

It may be as well, for the sake of distinctness, to anticipate, in this place, the regular course of history, and mention the manner in which this territorial question was finally settled between the rival sovereigns. It was impossible for King John to repress his disquiet at the indefinite enterprises of the Spanish monarchs ; he did not know how far they might extend, and whether they might not forestall him in all his anticipated discoveries in India. Finding, however, all attempts

fruitless to gain by stratagem an advantage over his wary and skilful antagonist, and despairing of any further assistance from the court of Rome, he had recourse, at last, to fair and amicable negotiations, and found, as is generally the case with those who turn aside into the inviting but crooked paths of craft, that had he kept to the line of frank and open policy, he would have saved himself a world of perplexity, and have arrived sooner at his object. He offered to leave to the Spanish sovereigns the free prosecution of their western discovery, and to conform to the plan of partition by a meridian line ; but he represented that this line had not been drawn far enough to the west, that while it left the wide ocean free to the range of Spanish enterprise, his navigators could not venture more than a hundred leagues west of his possessions, and had no scope nor sea-room for their southern voyages.

After much difficulty and discussion, this momentous dispute was adjusted by deputies from the two crowns, who met at Tordesillas in Old Castile, in the following year, and on the 7th of

June, 1494, signed a treaty, by which the papal line of partition was moved to three hundred and seventy leagues west of the Cape de Verd Islands. It was agreed that within six months an equal number of caravels and mariners, on the part of the two nations, should rendezvous at the island of the Grand Canary, provided with men learned in astronomy and navigation. They were to proceed thence to the Cape de Verd Islands, and thence westward three hundred and seventy leagues, and determine the proposed line from pole to pole, dividing the ocean between the two nations*. Each of the two powers engaged solemnly to observe the bounds thus prescribed, and to prosecute no enterprise beyond its proper limits ; though it was agreed that the Spanish navigators might traverse freely the eastern parts of the ocean in prosecuting their rightful voyages. Various circumstances impeded the proposed expedition to determine the line, but the treaty remained in force, and prevented all further discussions.

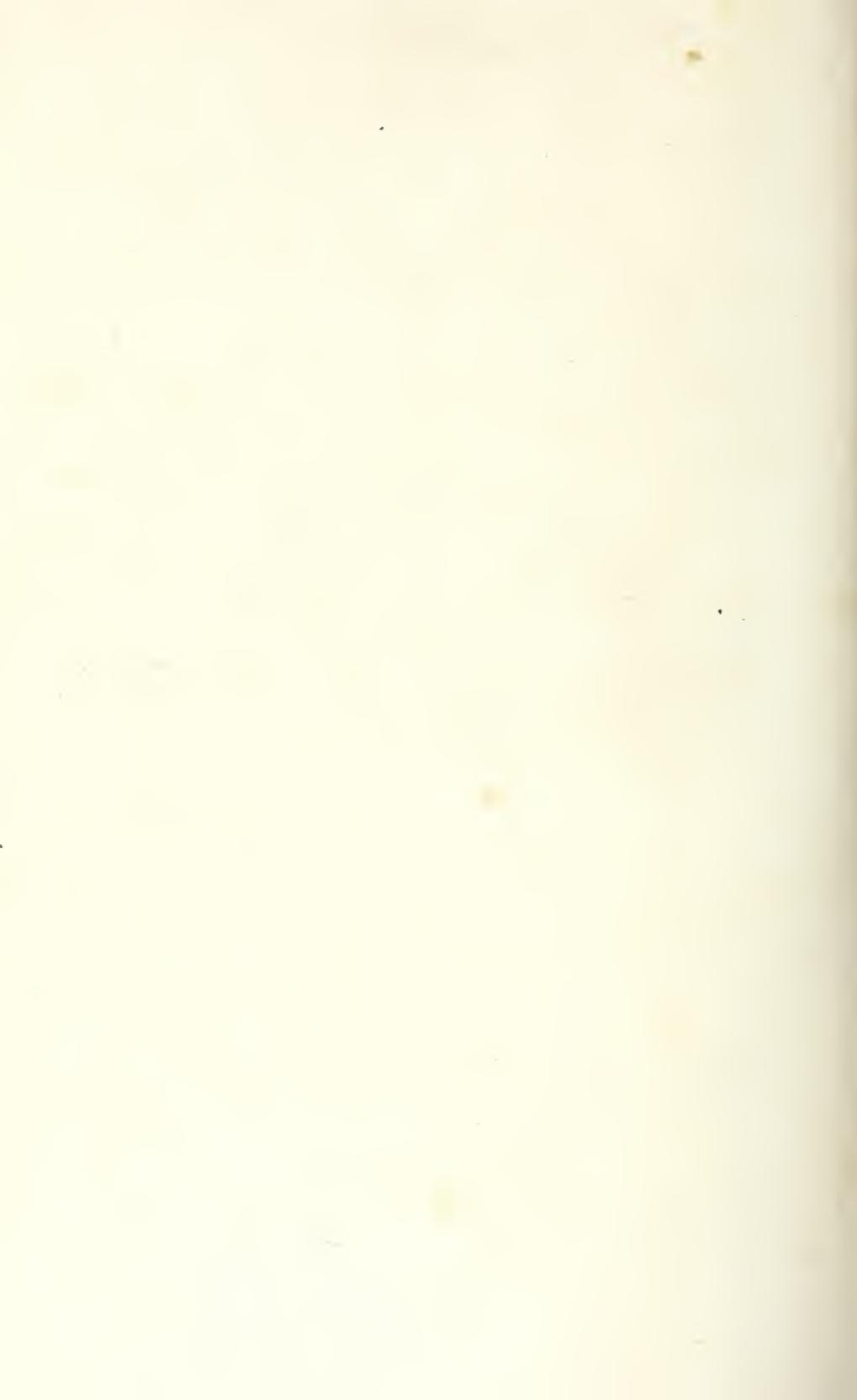
Thus, says Vasconcelos, this great question, the

* Zurita, Hist. del Rey Fernand., 1. i., c. 29. Vasconcelos, lib. 6.

greatest ever agitated between the two crowns, for it was the partition of a new world, was amicably settled by the prudence and address of two of the most politic monarchs that ever swayed the sceptre. It was arranged to the satisfaction of both parties, each holding himself entitled to the vast countries that might be discovered within his boundary, without any regard to the rights of the native inhabitants.

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